NINTENDO POWER

2012 Preview • Kid Icarus: Uprising
Resident Evil: Revelations • Rhythm Thief
& the Emperor's Treasure • Mario Party 9
Heroes of Ruin • Xenoblade Chronicles

275

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012

SUBSCRIBER EDITION

9.5 out of 10
"A PLATFORMING MASTERPIECE"
-NINTENDO POWER
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EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief
Mild Cartoon Violence
Suggestive Themes

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A beloved franchise makes its long-awaited return in Kid Icarus: Uprising! We've got details galore on this N3DS exclusive, plus an interview with director Masahiro Sakurai.

Surviving the Game 44

It's the end of the world as we know it in the DS RPG Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2.

Stealing the Show 50

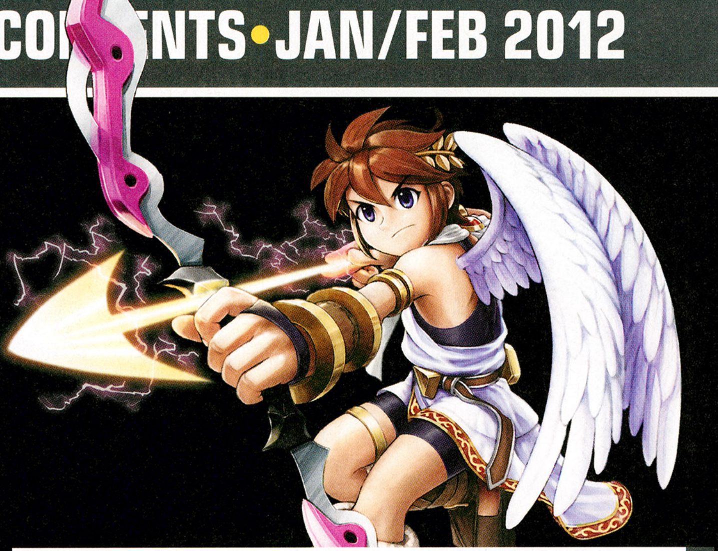
Learn how Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure for N3DS lets you get your groove on in a variety of ways, then check out our behind-the-scenes interview.

Heroes for Hire 58

Pick your warrior, grab your loot-sack, and embark on an N3DS multiplayer adventure in Heroes of Ruin.

2011 Nintendo Power Awards Nominees 70

The contenders for our annual awards have been revealed! Take a look, then get online and vote!



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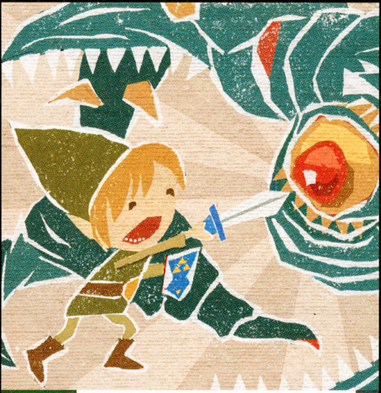
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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
GB = GAME BOY
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
Wii U = Wii U
WW = WiiWARE

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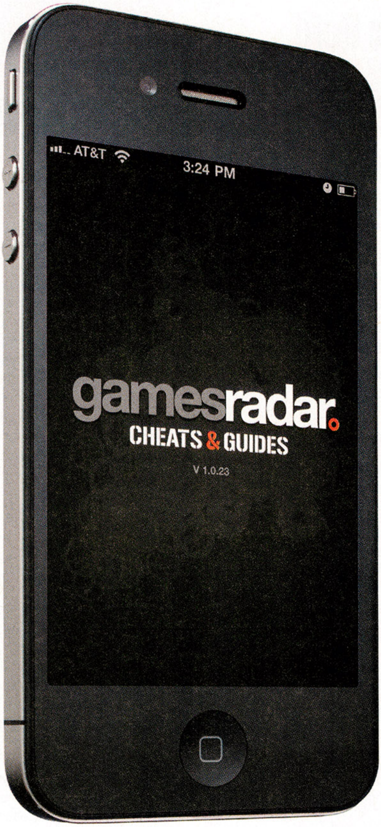

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Pulse

Let the Good Times Roll!

Chris Slate

The long-awaited return of a classic Nintendo character; new installments in the beloved Paper Mario, Luigi's Mansion, and Animal Crossing series; the introduction of a new Nintendo console, and with it, another brand-new way to play video games—2012 already looks to be a banner year for Nintendo fans! By the time we get to the E3 reveals in June, our heads will likely be spinning with more Nintendo goodness than we can handle. In the meantime, I've got my sights set on the approaching March release of Kid Icarus: Uprising, a sequel that I've waited more than 20 years for. Not only will it return one of my favorite NES characters, Pit, to a starring role, but with Masahiro Sakurai—the creator of Kirby and Super Smash Bros.—behind the game, it's sure to start the new year off with a bang. Before we dive headfirst into the future, however, be sure to take a last look at 2011 and vote for our annual awards (the ballot is on page 70).

On a side note, this issue is labeled "January/February" due to a scheduling quirk, but things will go back to normal with the March issue, which will be followed by April, May, June, etc. Subscribers will still get the same number of copies they signed up for, so just ignore the slight strangeness of the "January/February" phrasing, and everything will seem perfectly normal.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

HOLIDAY SPECIAL!
A Nintendo fan's essential guide to the year's best games, toys, and more!
NINTENDO POWER
Sonic Generations Reviewed!
Mario Kart 7 Scored!
The Legend of Zelda Skyward Sword Rated!

V274 DECEMBER 2011

This is The Hoff again, slightly worn out from a tough week of piledriving punks, yet hoping you're having a great start to 2012. Here's our special letter request for this issue: have you ever had a video game-inspired dream? If so, tell us all about it by sending your responses to the address on page 8.

LETTERS

A Hint of Hyrule

I just got Super Mario 3D Land. I was messing around in Level 5-2, and found out that if you light all four torches in the room just to the right of the spinning spike balls, the "uncover secret" noise from The Legend of Zelda plays! —**CHASE**

Nice observation! You didn't think that Nintendo's main man was gonna miss out on celebrating the Legend of Zelda series's 25th anniversary, did you?

Advanced Info

Hey, guys, I wanted to ask you a question. In your "A Decade Advanced" article in Vol. 268, you showed us your top 10 Game Boy Advance titles. Well, I went back to Vol. 231 when you did your "Best of the Best" article for your 20th anniversary and noticed the top 10 games on the list were the same as in the recent article except Gunstar Super Heroes and Drill Dozer switched places. Did you go back to this list for use in issue 268? And if so, how come Gunstar and Drill Dozer swapped spots? —**BLAZEHEARTPANTHER**

We used the list from Vol. 231 as a jumping-off point, and from there we bitterly argued for hours about updating the list. At the end of the brutal debate, we decided that we liked Drill Dozer just a smidge better than Gunstar Super Heroes.

Spoiler Alert?

I've been a huge fan of Nintendo Power for at least 10 years now, and generally I haven't been disappointed. The November 2011 issue, however, had a serious problem: *huge* spoilers! The MGS: Snake Eater 3D spoiler was the most egregious. I've never played the games, and I didn't know what happened to Snake at the end. Now I do. That surprise in the game is gone forever. —**W. OREO**

Actually, the supposed spoiler about Snake's future isn't a spoiler at all; it's been one of the key selling points of the game since the original version was first announced several years ago, and it has nothing to do with the game's ending. Worry not; there's still a great story to discover.

Planet of the Apes

I was recently perusing issue 274 of your periodical, and I noticed a logical fallacy. On page 77, Chris Hoffman says that primates should not operate motor vehicles. The species *Homo Sapiens* is, in fact, a part of the order of primates. Therefore, Chris stated that *Homo Sapiens* should not operate motor vehicles, a circumstance that occurs billions of times every day. Thank you. —**LANKY KONG**

Aha! You noticed that, did you? Now you understand why I primarily use a velociraptor as my personal chauffeur when I travel by automobile.

Thanks so much for including the Mega Man Megamix and Gigamix manga series in your 2011 Holiday Buyers' Guide! If I hadn't picked up my brother's copy of Megamix Vol. 1 out of boredom one day, I would never have been inspired to play these classic games. —**KODESMI**

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For the Birds

Hello, guys at Nintendo Power. I just got my new issue in the mail. I'm on page 8, and I see you can send a letter by carrier pigeon. Could you please clarify whether or not that's a joke?

—**ICKYBOD CLAY**

If you can convince a carrier pigeon to deliver your letter to our office, we will gladly accept it.

Any Excuse for a Party

I was wondering—is Mario celebrating his 25th or 30th anniversary? After all, his first game (Donkey Kong) was in 1981, but everyone celebrates saying he's 25. Could you please make this clear to me? —**MARIOMASTER**

Since Donkey Kong was indeed released in 1981, 2011 marked the 30th anniversary of the Mario character. However, Super Mario Bros. was released in 1985, making 2010 the 25th anniversary of the beloved Super Mario game series. Make sense?

The Write Stuff

In my AP Language and Composition class, we were required to bring in an example of good writing. I decided to bring in your review of Star Fox 64 3D. We were asked to search our writing examples for rhetorical devices, word choice, logos/pathos/ethos, opposition, and intention. And your review had it all. I found examples of sententia, hyperbole, and irony. You certainly knew how to appeal to the emotions of gamers with your humor, sarcasm, and references to how the fans have been feeling about the series recently. Bottom line, you guys write killer reviews.

—**SLIPPY_SLAYER_101**

See, mom? Nintendo Power is totally educational.

A Date with Sonic

I found a typo when I saw the Sonic Generations N3DS preview. I was really excited when I saw this, so I read the whole thing. When I saw the info at the end, I noticed that you put February 2012, and not November 22, 2011. I went to pick it up on Tuesday, and I got it. I had just realized what you did. You put the Mario and Sonic release date instead! Don't do it again!

—**KNUXTHEECHIDNA**

When we went to press with the issue containing that preview, we'd been told that Sonic Generations had been delayed until February. Luckily, that ended up not being the case. It's out now, and it's pretty great, so check it out!

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

I am a huge fan of Sonic the Hedgehog, especially Sonic Adventure 2 Battle. I think it was one of the best Sonic games of all time, but one of my problems is how the characters pull random items and things out of their behinds—for example, when Tails pulls the fake emerald out. Even Sonic reacted to it.

—**AEROBLAST4309**

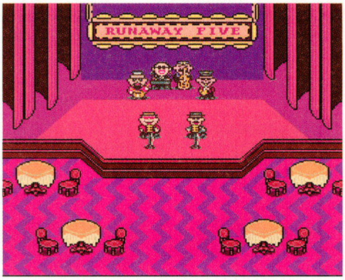
The Hoff says: This inquiry goes beyond my knowledge. To get you an answer, I turn to the only being I know capable of providing such insight: Sonic the Hedgehoff.

Sonic the Hedgehoff says: Whoa! You're not fast enough! See any pockets on this getup? No way! They'll only slow you down. You don't need pockets when you've got attitude! Ha! Lean and mean is what I call it! Besides, just check out all the things I can store back here! Look! A chili dog!

Cue the Music!

I've been looking at The Legend of Zelda 25th Anniversary Symphony Concert, and I've been thinking about other concerts Nintendo could do for other games. I'm hoping that in 2020, they'll hold a 25th anniversary concert for my personal favorite game, EarthBound. That game has one of the best soundtracks to date. Plus, it would be cool to see The Runaway Five live in concert. —**CAPTAIN STRONG**

If such an official concert happens, I shall eat my own trousers. However, I agree that it would be epic. The more orchestral performances of great video game tunes we get, the better.



I think my greatest gaming victory was finally beating New Super Mario Bros. Wii. After losing 18 lives, I finally got the hidden propeller suit, flew away, hit the button, and finally, *bam*! See ya next time, Bowser....

—NERFMAN

What's your most surprising video game victory?

My most surprising video game victory came from when I was playing EarthBound on the Super NES. I had lost all of my party members except Jeff, and I had to go up against the Diamond Dog. I thought I wouldn't make it, but I pulled through and I beat the boss. I had only 2 HP left, but it was worth it. **—DAVY SPROCKET**

In Donkey Kong Country Returns, I played the final boss about 50 billion times. One time I was just jumping to avoid fire and I landed on the button on his head for the final time! I was seriously not expecting it at all. Probably the only time I have beat a video game on accident! **—VISIBLECC1**

My most noteworthy video game victory would have to be from two years ago, when I first completed Super Mario Galaxy. Through much of the final battle I found myself with only one health left. I'm finally at the climactic point of the battle, again at one health, scrambling for a coin...I finally get Bowser spinning again (with me still at one health) and manage to send him into the lava. I jump out of my seat in excitement, realizing that this had been the first Mario game I had beaten in over three years! This was a very special moment for me, and still remains one of my most noteworthy video game victories to this date.

—CHRIS T.

I'm not going to talk about my video game victory, but instead about my mom's surprise victory against me in New Super Mario Bros. Wii. She was so excited that she even posted a piece of paper on the fridge that said "9-27-2010 I beat Cole in a video game!"

—COLE T.

I definitely have a video game victory that stands out above all others. In Super Smash Bros. Brawl, I had been trying to beat Boss Battles on Intense mode for weeks, but I had only gotten to Tabuu 9 or 10 times out of literally hundreds of attempts. Every time he used his off-waves, I would be too nervous to concentrate on timing my dodges correctly. I was nearly at the end of my rope one sunny afternoon when he unleashed the fatal move, but this time, I impulsively used the Pokémon Change at the last second and somehow managed to dodge all three waves. After that, all it took was a few Squirtle kicks to finish him off. **—POKEMONDOTHON**

I had one arrow left and an empty magic meter; I was at the end of the Stone Tower Temple in Majora's Mask. Unaware of how much health the boss had left and assuming I would die, my friends crowded around me as I attempted to fight. I aimed blindly into the sand toward the worm's tail as it burst out of the ground, and I shot off my last arrow not knowing what would happen. To my extreme surprise I saw the cut-scene showing the worm fall to the ground dead, and my friends and I started cheering. That is my most incredible victory in a video game ever.

—LLOYD THE GREAT #2

Usually in Mario Kart Wii Wi-Fi races I do well during most of the race, but on the last lap, I get destroyed and often end up finishing second to last. But one time I played Rainbow Road with 10 other people...and came in first with a 20-second lead. That was my greatest victory, hands-down.

—TANOOKISUITSTEVE

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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ISSN: 1041-9551

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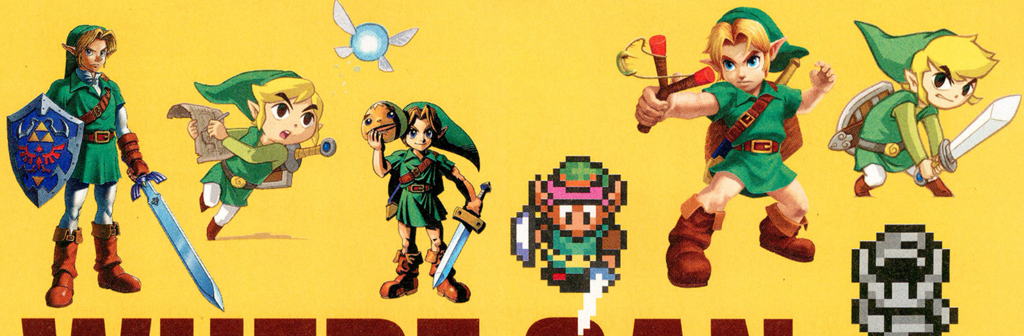

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2D: 44%
(LIKE SUPER METROID)

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(LIKE METROID PRIME)

2.5D: 25%
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THE BEST KIND OF CONTROL IS...

- **59% Analog Control Stick**
- 17% Motion control
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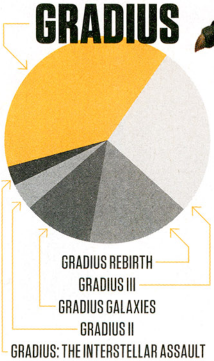
- 4% Power Glove

THE BEST GAME IN THE 25-YEAR-OLD GRADIUS SERIES IS...

GRADIUS



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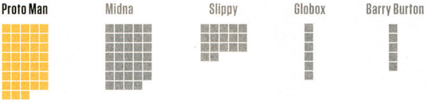
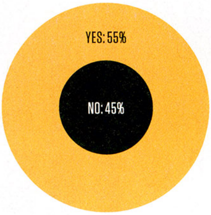


WHO IS SCARIER?

GANON

Ganon 45% • Giga Bowser 40% • Tyrant 15%

WHEN PLAYING THE LEGEND OF ZELDA GAMES, DO YOU COLLECT EVERY SINGLE PIECE OF HEART?



MULTIPLAYER IS BEST WHEN IT'S...

57% CO-OP

43% VERSUS

WHAT'S YOUR SNACK OF CHOICE WHEN GAMING?

CHIPS 42%

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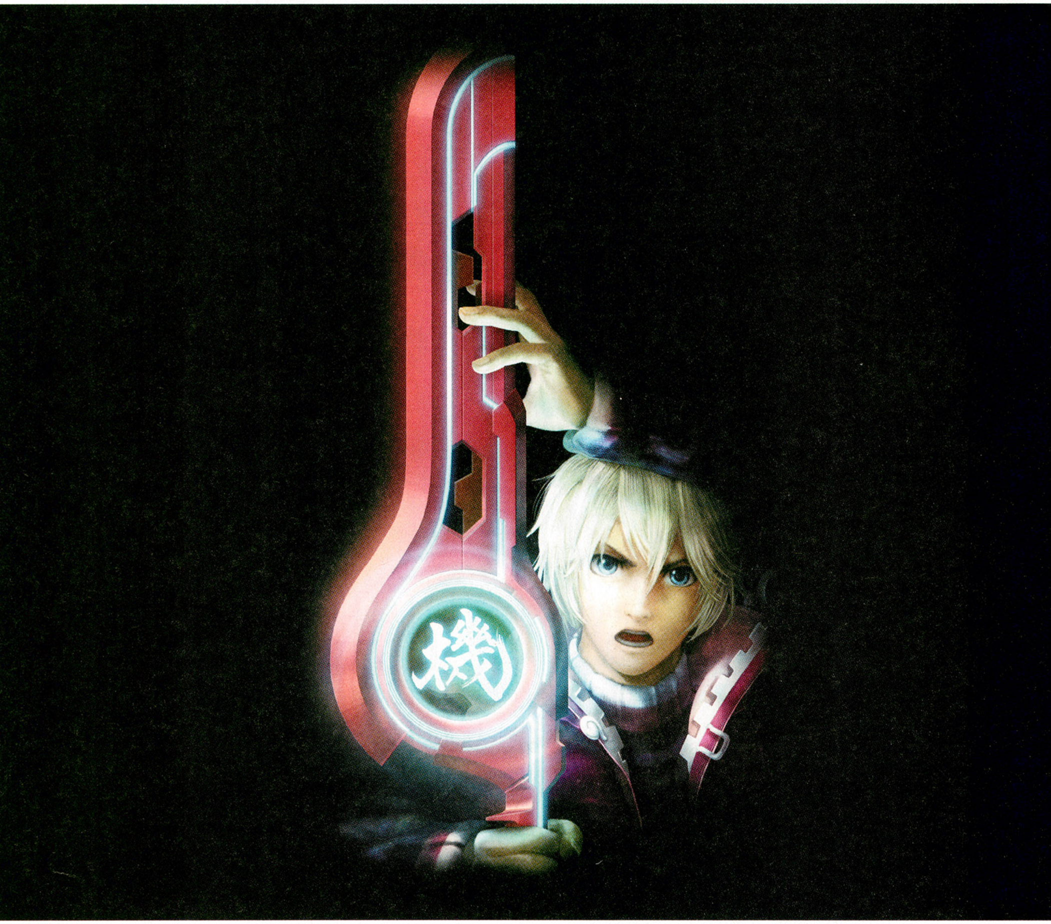
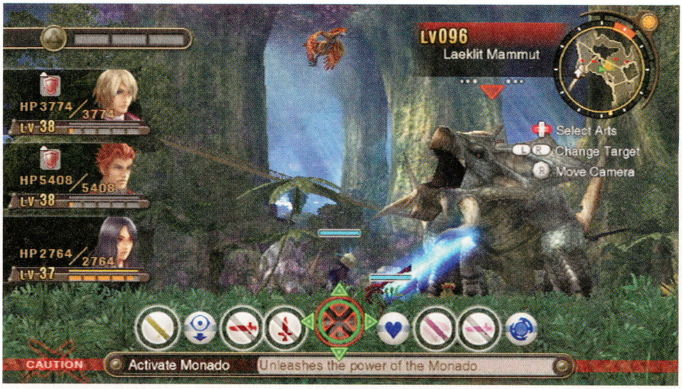


Well-Tempered Blade

RPG fans rejoice! The epic Xenoblade Chronicles is getting a US release after all.


LV096
Laeklit Mammut
HP 3774 / 3774
LV 38
HP 5408 / 5408
LV 38
HP 2764 / 2764
LV 37
Select Arts
Change Target
Move Camera
CAUTION
Activate Monado
Unleashes the power of the Monado

[Below] Our heroes look to the heavens in thanks that their game is finally coming to North America.

EVER SINCE XENOBLADE Chronicles launched to rave reviews in Japan and Europe, North American RPG fans have been holding out hope for a domestic release. Their wish is granted—Nintendo of America has finally announced plans to release Xenoblade Chronicles in April, exclusively at GameStop and Nintendo's own online store.

So what's the big deal? Maybe all the attention comes from's the game's likable cast and its intriguing storyline set on the corpses of two fallen gods. Or maybe it's more about the way the game's battle system combines real-time elements with traditional RPG strategy. Or it could be due to the phenomenal graphics—some of the best ever seen on the Wii console—and the catchy soundtrack from an all-star team of composers that includes Yoko Shimomura of Kingdom Hearts fame and Chrono Trigger's Yasunori Mitsuda.

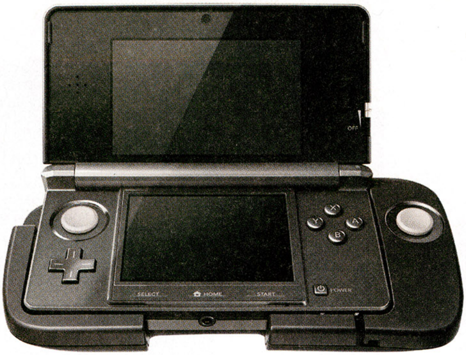
But the team behind Xenoblade Chronicles seems to have had loftier goals than just checking off all the boxes on some RPG-design cheat sheet. This title is regarded as one of the few Japanese RPGs of this generation to actually advance the genre, mixing in some of the open-world elements that are popular in the West while still retaining the strong central narrative that Japanese RPGs are famous for. That means giving players a wide-open world to explore and some freedom to choose how they do so, while offering hundreds of side quests to pull them toward every lovely corner of the game's massive dead-god continents.

Has developer Monolith managed to pull off this ambitious gameplan? We'll find out for ourselves in April, but our Wii-playing brethren across the oceans sure seem to think so. —**CASEY L.**

LV006
Mechon M63
HP 1229 / 1229
LV 10
HP 1847 / 1847
LV 10
Select Arts
Change Target
Move Camera
CAUTION
Light Heal
Restores HP to one party member.

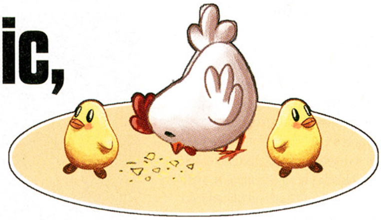
Full Circle

Nintendo doubles down on analog controls with the Circle Pad Pro.

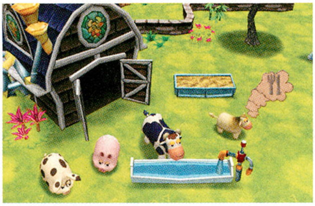


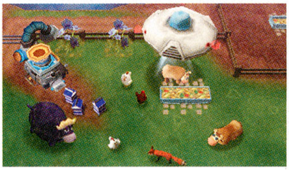
THOSE LOOKING to have a little more control over their Nintendo 3DS hardware will get their way on February 7 when Nintendo releases the Circle Pad Pro accessory for the system. This optional device adds a second analog Circle Pad that is compatible with certain games, including Resident Evil: Revelations and Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D. In addition, the peripheral sports an extra pair of shoulder buttons. All of these enhancements are contained within a cradle that attaches comfortably to the N3DS handheld. Players will be able to purchase the Circle Pad Pro for $19.99 at GameStop stores and online at http://www.gamestop.com. —**PHIL T.**

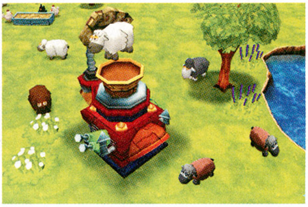
Play That Funky Music, White Chicken



Funky Barn 3D brings the farm-sim craze to Nintendo 3DS.





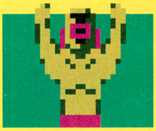


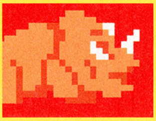
ALTHOUGH CASUAL FARM GAMES are horrifyingly ubiquitous, the genre is undeniably underrepresented on the N3DS. To right that wrong, Ubisoft will bring Funky Barn 3D to the platform this spring. Developer Tantalus's take on the genre involves copious servings of zaniness (or *funkiness*, if you will). Expect to see plenty of amusing contraptions—and comedic, if implausible, animal behaviors—as you go about your agribusiness.

Of course, there's more on offer than cartoonish animations; players will use the handheld's various input methods to harvest crops, milk cows, build gardens, and shear sheep, among other things. Such activities will be handled via clever touch and gyro controls; for example, fruit can be harvested from trees via a shaking motion. Would-be farmers will also have to manage a budget and infrastructure, overseeing such tasks as road construction, pest dispersal, and pollution control.

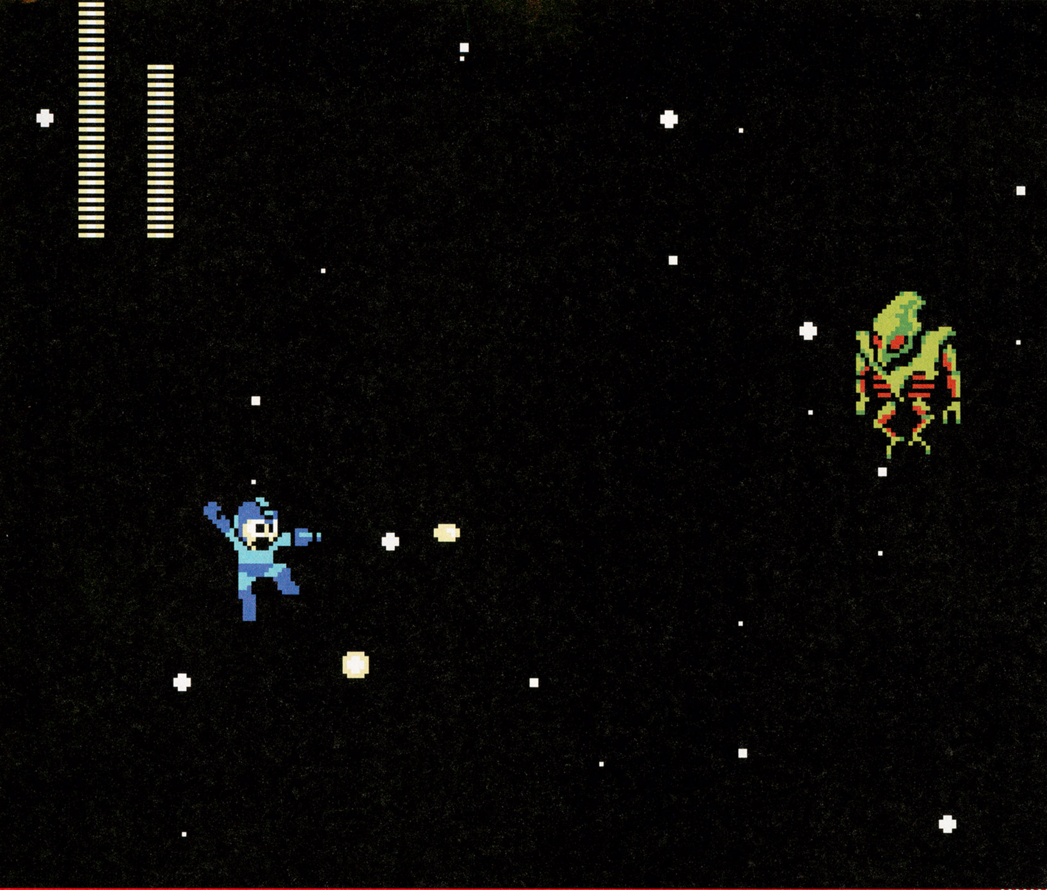
Ubisoft hopes to achieve high replay value by including challenging scenarios, such as difficult geographic locations and already-out-of-control farms. Multiplayer support is included for good measure; players will be able to trade rare items and animals, send weather hazards toward each other's farms, and even interact with fellow farmers in-game. —**PATRICK C.**

A WINNER IS...
RPG fans who have been waiting for Xenoblade.





DODONGO DISLIKES...
Octopi crawling out of the ocean and walking around.



THAT WAS AWESOME!

OUR FAVORITE VIDEO GAME MOMENTS

HE'S AN ALIEN!?

MEGA MAN 2,
NES, 1989

"The final battle of Mega Man 2 contains a shocking twist: Dr. Wily morphs into an alien! It's actually just one of Wily's tricks, but it was still a mindblowing scene." —**CHRIS H.**

STAR POWER

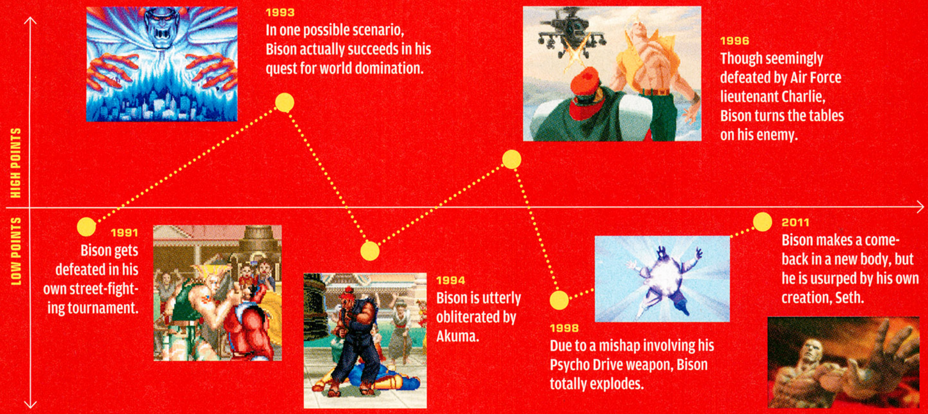
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR
ARCADE, 1991

M. Bison

Where fighting games are concerned, there's no one more evil than the power-mad leader of Shadaloo.

CAREER GRAPH



1991
Bison gets defeated in his own street-fighting tournament.

1993
In one possible scenario, Bison actually succeeds in his quest for world domination.

1994
Bison is utterly obliterated by Akuma.

1996
Though seemingly defeated by Air Force lieutenant Charlie, Bison turns the tables on his enemy.

1998
Due to a mishap involving his Psycho Drive weapon, Bison totally explodes.

2011
Bison makes a comeback in a new body, but he is usurped by his own creation, Seth.

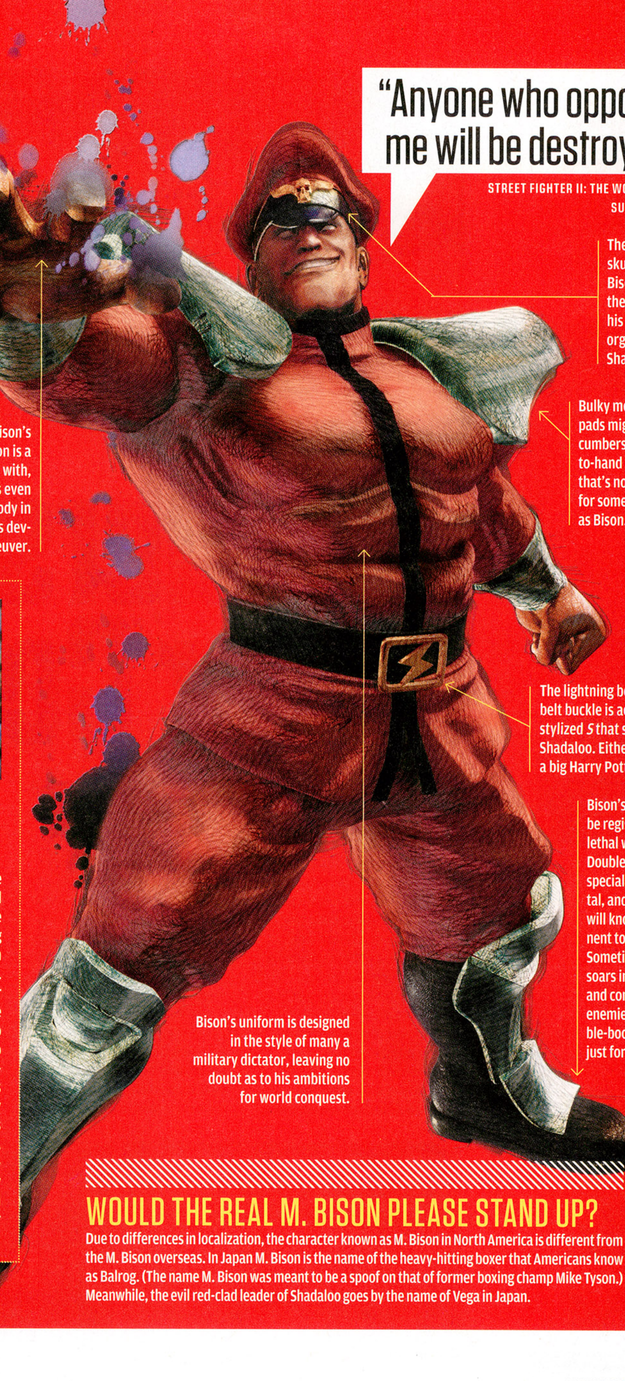
OUR FAVORITE M. BISON GAMES

Street Fighter II Turbo: Hyper Fighting
SUPER NES, 1993
Featuring numerous improvements over the original Street Fighter II, Street Fighter II Turbo is considered by many to be the definitive iteration of the game. It also marks M. Bison's first home-console appearance as a playable character.

Street Fighter Alpha 2
ARCADE, 1996
With precise controls, a great cast, and nuanced gameplay, Street Fighter Alpha 2 is one of the best fighting games ever made. In addition, it emphasizes the Street Fighter story, including M. Bison's connections to Rose and Charlie.

Street Fighter Alpha 3
ARCADE, 1998
Street Fighter Alpha 3 builds upon the success of its predecessor by adding more characters and multiple fighting styles. The last boss is a powered-up version of M. Bison commonly referred to as Final Bison.

Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition
NINTENDO 3DS, 2011
After a long hiatus the Street Fighter series returned to Nintendo systems, boasting a combination of classic gameplay and modern visuals, plus a slew of enhancements such as anime cut-scenes, steroscopic 3D effects, and touch-screen controls. Seth, a creation of Bison's, is the final boss.



"Anyone who opposes me will be destroyed!"

STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR
SUPER NES, 1992

The winged skull on Bison's hat is the symbol of his criminal organization, Shadaloo.

The purple stuff radiating from Bison's hand is known as Psycho Energy. Bison is a highly skilled martial artist to begin with, and the Energy makes his attacks even stronger. He envelops his entire body in Psycho Energy when he performs his devastating Psycho Crusher maneuver.

Bulky metal shoulder pads might seem cumbersome in hand-to-hand combat, but that's not a problem for someone as buff as Bison.

The lightning bolt on Bison's belt buckle is actually a stylized *S* that stands for Shadaloo. Either that or he's a big Harry Potter fan.

Bison's legs should be registered as lethal weapons. His Double Knee Press special move is brutal, and his slide kick will knock any opponent to the ground. Sometimes he even soars into the air and comes down on enemies with a double-booted stomp, just for laughs.

Bison's uniform is designed in the style of many a military dictator, leaving no doubt as to his ambitions for world conquest.

WELCOME TO BISONOPOLIS

You don't need to be a gamer to be familiar with M. Bison's tyrannical ways. Film aficionados know the character through award-winning actor Raul Julia's portrayal of him in 1994's *Street Fighter* feature film. The movie version of Bison is far more outgoing than his video game inspiration. His ultimate goal is to bring the world into the loving grip of his Pax Bisonica as his genetically mutated soldiers march across every nation. The world's currency will be replaced with Bison Dollars (each worth five British pounds), which feature a portrait of the planet's new ruler. For many, the day they saw Bison grace the big screen was the most important day of their lives. But for him, it was Tuesday.

WOULD THE REAL M. BISON PLEASE STAND UP?

Due to differences in localization, the character known as M. Bison in North America is different from the M. Bison overseas. In Japan M. Bison is the name of the heavy-hitting boxer that Americans know as Balrog. (The name M. Bison was meant to be a spoof on that of former boxing champ Mike Tyson.) Meanwhile, the evil red-clad leader of Shadaloo goes by the name of Vega in Japan.

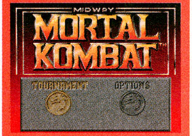
POWER QUIZ

EASY

Ryu Hayabusa is the star of what series of popular ninja games by Tecmo?

AVERAGE

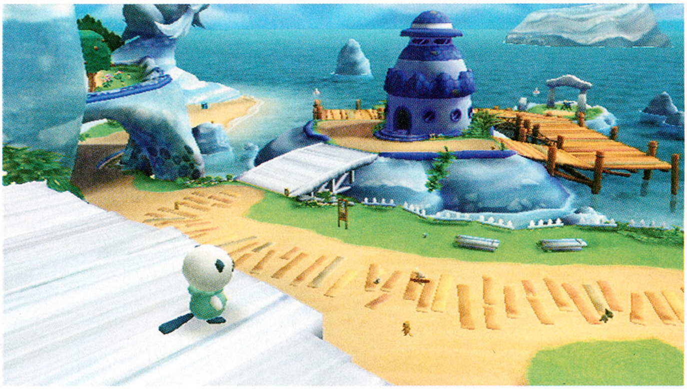
Which ninja tells opponents to "Get over here!" in Mortal Kombat?



HARDCORE

What is the true identity of the Cyborg Ninja from the Metal Gear Solid series?

ANSWERS EASY: Ninja Gaiden; AVERAGE: Scorpion; HARDCORE: Frank Jaeger (aka Gray Fox)



Wonders Never Cease

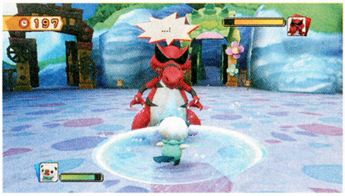
Pikachu's gonna need a few good friends to unravel the mysteries of **PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond** for Wii.

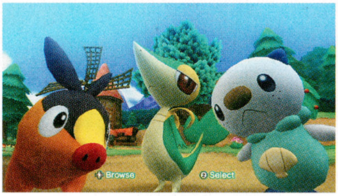
WHEN PIKACHU last visited PokéPark in 2010's PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure, it had a grand time exploring and making new friends. But in this return visit, Pikachu finds a whiff of something nefarious in the air—as rumors fly about a mysterious world that hosts a mythical amusement park, the Pokémon of PokéPark are disappearing without a trace.

Pikachu is on the case, but it won't have to go it alone. Once Pikachu befriends Oshawott, Snivy, and Tepig, they'll join as fully playable characters. Each has a unique set of moves it can unleash in combat, and special properties like the ability to swim, high-jump, or bash through obstacles, which allow players to reach otherwise-inaccessible regions of PokéPark.

Like PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure, PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond is laid out with a large open world full of Pokémon to befriend. By bringing them gifts, beating them in combat, or winning at a game of chase or hide-and-seek, Pikachu and his companions can win the trust of their fellow Pokémon, and secure their help with the greater obstacles ahead. PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond is primarily a single-player adventure, but once you've cleared one of the elaborate Wii remote-controlled minigames known as "Attractions," you'll unlock the ability to replay it with up to three other players.

With its expanded cast, new multiplayer options, and a much more compelling storyline, PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond promises to be more than just another walk in the park. —**CASEY L.**

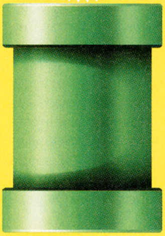




WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

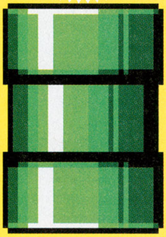
5 YEARS AGO



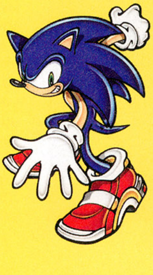
WORLD'S FIRST Wii REVIEWS
RAYMAN MADDEN TRAUMA CENTER MONKEY BALL
ZELDA EXCITE TRUCK WII SPORTS RED STEEL
NINTENDO POWER
We dream of ZELDA

Hot on the heels of the release of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, the January 2006 issue of Nintendo Power was packed with Zelda goodness, including strategies, a behind-the-scenes interview, and even a poster. The issue also contained lots of Nintendo DS coverage and a report on The Hoff's tragic defeat at the hands of WWE star Rey Mysterio. The February 2006 issue, meanwhile, focused on games such as WarioWare: Smooth Moves and Final Fantasy VI Advance.

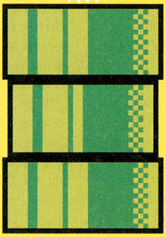
10 YEARS AGO

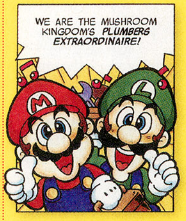


With the release of the Nintendo GameCube fresh in everybody's minds, the January and February issues of Nintendo Power were packed with coverage of games like Super Smash Bros. Melee, Pikmin, and NBA Courtside 2002. Sonic the Hedgehog was also a hot topic, as he made his Nintendo-system debut in Sonic Advance for GBA and Sonic Adventure 2: Battle for GCN. Strangely, over-the-top cartoon racing games such as The Simpsons: Road Rage and Cel Damage were a popular trend as well.



20 YEARS AGO




WE ARE THE MUSHROOM KINGDOM'S PLUMBERS EXTRAORDINAIRE!

Early 1992 was a great time to be a gamer—and a Nintendo Power fan. Coverage of top-notch titles such as Super Castlevania IV, Mega Man 4, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III, and The Legend of the Mystical Ninja filled the magazine's pages, supported by comics inspired by the Super Mario series and The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past. NP also introduced a new review system in which two guys bantered back and forth about the latest releases; clearly it was before its time.

ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
11 Classic Games Hearts • Spades Euchre • Canasta Bridge • more
20 Solitaire Games FreeCell • Klondike Golf • Yukon • Spider Pyramid • many more
13 Casino Games Texas Hold'em • Double Flop Hold'em 5-Card Draw • 7-Card Stud • BlackJack Crazy Pineapple • 5 Video Poker • more
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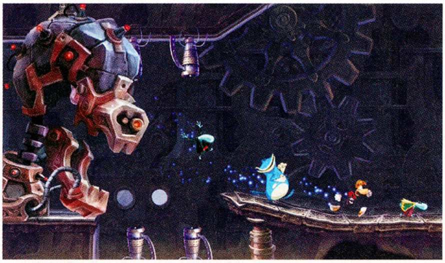
Origins Story

What goes into making a platforming masterpiece and Game of the Year contender? We chat with the creators of **Rayman Origins** to find out.

If you haven't played Rayman Origins yet, we insist that you put down the magazine right now, treat yourself to one of the finest Wii titles ever crafted, see a physician about having the goofy grin surgically removed from your face, then come back and read this interview with creative director Michel Ancel and lead designer Sebastien Morin. We'll wait. —STEVE T.

NINTENDO POWER What came first: the idea for the UbiArt Framework or the desire to make another 2D Rayman title? And how did the other follow from that?

MICHEL ANCEL The initial focus was on the UbiArt Framework. The idea was to take the work from the most creative artists and animate it, rather than designing from the constraints within an engine. We really wanted to keep the intentions of the original art. Most importantly, the UbiArt Framework allows for iteration with high-definition graphics in real time, one of the major keys to emerging concepts and creative, innovative gameplay. When we saw what we could do in 2D—the worlds we could create—I naturally thought of Rayman. It was a similar process for the first Rayman, with such a major focus being on the art. Rayman was born on 2D, so this seemed like a great way for him to be reborn.



It's been a while since your studio worked on a pure platformer. Did you find that you had to sharpen those skills again or is it like riding a bike; once you learn, you never forget?

SEBASTIEN MORIN It's more like reuniting with a long-lost friend. Sure, you begin by talking about the past, but it quickly feels old. Both of you have changed a lot, so if you want to push forward, you have to bring all of your new, refreshing experiences and discover how you may create something new again.

The treasure-chase stages in the game are fantastic, and we love the way everything is timed and spaced just perfectly so that players have to keep moving full speed to narrowly avoid one hazard after another. What was the inspiration for those levels, and were they especially difficult to balance?

SM: It's all about flow and memorization, just like a good song that you try to play on guitar. You screw up at the beginning then you become more and more fluent. When you achieve it, you feel euphoric. We chose to make those levels quite unforgiving, to enhance this "got it!" feeling at the end. When you do that, you have no choice but using patterns that have already been used in the main level. So creating those levels felt like composing a tune, catchy enough so that you don't mind playing it again and again.

There aren't really any boss encounters until the second half of the game. What was the thinking behind that?

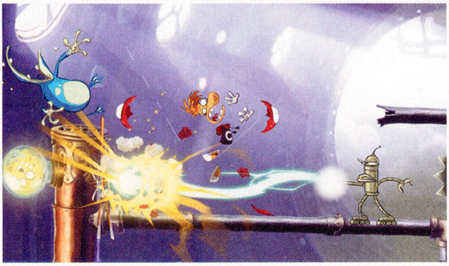
SM: The first half is more a journey through the worlds of Rayman, so it made more sense to finish each world by riding the Moskito and meeting with the guardian of the next world. The second half of the game is way more open; you may choose to complete worlds in any order you want. There, we needed more to punctuate each one with an epic boss battle that challenges everything you've learned in its world.

Origins squeezes some pretty amazing visuals out of the Wii hardware. Did the fact that it's a hand-drawn game make it easier to bring to Nintendo's console largely intact? Aside from resolution, were there any sacrifices you had to make as compared to the other versions of the game?

MA: I think the fact that it's a 2D platforming game made it such a natural fit for Wii. We are really proud that we are giving everyone the same experience, no matter which console they have at home. We really didn't have to sacrifice for the Wii.... We have the same number of levels, the same music, and the same visuals. Of course the resolution of the machines is different, but everyone will play the same game.

Has this project rekindled your love for 2D visuals? What do they offer that polygons can't?

MA: In 2D, it's easier to create content, characters, and levels, but what's harder is that you can't hide poor game design behind Hollywood-type sequences. 2D shows every collision mistake and control error. It's a precise kind of game that forces us to manage a lot of details. After a long time spent on complex 3D games, it's really cool to



jump into a full gameplay experience with no turnarounds. On top of that, the 3D consoles of today support incredible graphics and sounds in 2D. It's amazing to be able to create a universe with the quality of the best animated features, but in an interactive experience!

The game's soundtrack is every bit as crazy and inspired as its visuals. Do you have a favorite selection, and what role do you think music plays in the overall experience of Rayman Origins?

MA: The approach with the soundtrack is the same kind of approach we took with the visual design—real art, real instruments (and even instruments Christophe [Héral, the game's composer] has designed and built himself just for the game)...real immersion! We've noticed people will play the "cage" maps where you free the Electoons over and over, literally, just to hear the music in these maps. Like previous Rayman games, the music seals the deal, bringing the quirky, lively, and free-spirited universe to life. Christophe has mastered the art of subliming the mood, the fun, and the humor onscreen!

From a gameplay standpoint, one of the most remarkable things about Origins is the way it constantly introduces new play mechanics and level concepts. Was that a focus for the team from the beginning, or something you started to become more conscious of during development?

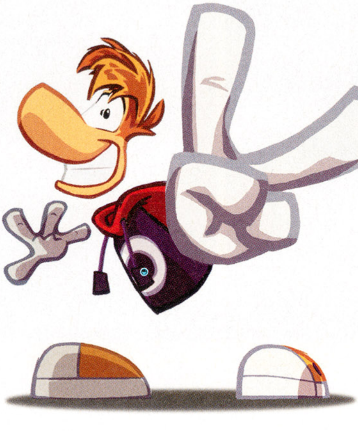
SM: We have a team that is really good at prototyping and they are constantly showing off their original ideas. We often had to pare down all those ideas, which is quite a luxury. You have to distill those concepts with the right timing, so that you give room enough for the player to discover, learn, and master them all. It's a very interesting balancing act!

We obviously love the game, but if we have one complaint, it's that there aren't four distinct characters; you've just got Rayman, Globox, and the Teensies. Why isn't there a unique fourth character?

MA: Yes, but you have so many different types of Teensies! We really love the flexibility we had with the Teensies' costumes. We could make ones look like zombies, ninjas, even Rayman and Globox.

Does Rayman scratch a different creative itch for you than something like Beyond Good & Evil? What are some of the unique joys and frustrations that come from developing a Rayman title?

MA: My approach for Rayman and BG&E is the same, but of course, in Rayman, you expect something simpler. That's the tricky part: making it look simple but also making it more complex than expected in terms of exploration or challenges. For me the platformer genre is not different than the other genres; I really like the mix between immersion and gameplay. The feeling of rhythm is also very important—being able to master the controls and enter into a flow of actions without being stopped! When I play, I like to be teased by the next surprise, and the surprise can be gameplay or art or both! I need both of them to feel okay with a game. Gameplay is the activity, the "how;" and art is the meaning, the "why". That's why all the games I work on have this double approach of art and gameplay.



What was the most challenging aspect of Rayman Origins's development? In your opinion, what's the core essence of Rayman and what separates himfrom other platforming heroes?

MA: I think it's a big challenge to create a multiplayer game with four people on the screen at once. I think that we face the same problems as Mario or Little Big Planet or Donkey Kong Country Returns; we want everybody to play and enjoy the game at the same time even when players have different skill sets. That's a big challenge. After a lot of testing, we arrived at some results that compared to similar games but with unique features specific to Rayman Origins. For example, the fighting dimension of the game brings a lot to differentiate it from the others. In the end, we want big kids like us to be able to play with their own kids.

Would you like to work on another Rayman title in the near future? Or will you take an extended break to work on other projects as you did between Rayman 2 and Origins?

MA: I think change is good. Variety is good. So I always want to try new things. I can say that Rayman Origins is the first game that, at the end of the project, I am still excited to play from start to finish. Typically, after two years of seeing the same game every day, you kind of need some time away from it. With Rayman Origins, I'm excited to play with my friends and family. That aspect of being able to share experiences with this game is really cool for me. So, I guess we'll see what's next....

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

Flying High

Show your love of Super Mario Galaxy 2 with these nonarticulated Super Size 9" figures. You can choose from either flying Mario (complete with stand) or his disembodied incarnation, Boo Mario; they sell for about $17.99 each.

Double Speed

Can't get enough Sonic the Hedgehog 20th anniversary goodness? Then be sure to snag these 5" Sonic Through Time action figures from Jazwares, featuring classic 1991 Sonic and modern 2011 Sonic. They're available at most toy retailers.

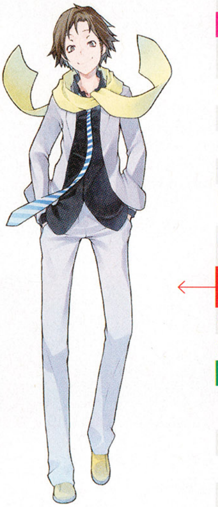
Keys and Karts

Mario (both in kart and on motorcycle), Luigi, and Donkey Kong are revving up their engines and ready to zoom into your pocket with these Mario Kart Wii keychains. The keyring portion can be easily unscrewed for display purposes.

GAME FORECAST

Wii

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	7/12
Combat Wings: The Great Battles of WWII	City	2/12
Country Dance Special Edition	GameMill	2/12
Karaoke Joysound	Konami	Q1 12
Mario Party 9	Nintendo	3/12
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
MLB 2K12	2K Sports	3/12
Outdoors Unlimited	Mastiff	2/12
PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond	Nintendo	2/12
Rhythm Heaven Fever	Nintendo	2/12
Xenoblade Chronicles	Nintendo	4/12



Wii U

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Batman: Arkham City	Warner Bros.	TBA
Darksiders II	THQ	TBA
Killer Freaks from Outer Space	Ubisoft	TBA
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	TBA
Metro: Last Light	THQ	TBA
Ninja Gaiden III: Razor's Edge	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Pikmin*	Nintendo	TBA
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tekken*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Online	Ubisoft	TBA

NINTENDO DS

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	7/12
Chess for Kids	Mentor	2/12
Gogo's Crazy Bones	GameMill	3/12
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
MLB 2K12	2K Sports	3/12
Naraba: The Labyrinth of Light	Mentor	2/12
Naraba: The Mysterious Palace	Mentor	2/12
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	Atlus	2/12
Silverlicious	GameMill	3/12
Xia Xia	GameMill	3/12

NINTENDO 3DS

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	7/12
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Balloon Pop 2	UFO	2/12
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Brunswick Pro Bowling	Crave	TBA
Carnival Games Wild West 3D	Take-Two	TBA
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Fractured Soul: Deep Void	Ignition	SUM 12
Funky Barn 3D	Ubisoft	SPR 12
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Heroes of Ruin	Square Enix	SPR 12
Horses 3D	Ubisoft	3/12
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	3/12
Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance	Square Enix	TBA
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	2012
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Luigi's Mansion 2	Nintendo	2012
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	Konami	Q1 12
Naruto Shippuden Action*	Tomy	TBA
NCIS The Video Game	Ubisoft	3/12
Nicktoons MLB 3D	2K Play	3/12
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
Planet Crashers 3D	Ignition	3/12
Pro Evolution Soccer 2012 3D	Konami	Q1 12
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Rayman Origins	Ubisoft	3/12
Raving Rabbids 5*	Ubisoft	TBA
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	Sega	2012
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	Atari	3/12
Shifting World	Aksys	SPR 12
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
Sudoku Premier Edition	Majesco	TBA
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	Namco Bandai	2/12
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

1. Xenoblade Chronicles
2. Mario Party 9
3. Rhythm Heaven Fever
4. The Amazing Spider-Man
5. Men in Black

Wii U

1. Batman: Arkham City
2. Ninja Gaiden III: Razor's Edge
3. LEGO City Stories
4. Tekken*
5. Darksiders II

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Paper Mario*
2. Luigi's Mansion 2
3. Kid Icarus: Uprising
4. Animal Crossing*
5. Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH.

* TENTATIVE TITLE

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

DOWNLOAD

IN THIS SECTION

NINTENDO ESHOP FEATURE
Top 40 Must-Play Games

WIIWARE REVIEWS
BIG BASS ARCADE
GNOMZ
PINOCCHIO'S PUZZLE

DSIWARE REVIEWS
1950S LAWN MOWER KID
BLOONS TD
CASTLE CONQUEROR–HEROES
COME ON! HEROES
DOUBLE BLOOB
ESCAPE TRICK: CONVENIENCE STORE

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
ADVENTURE ISLAND
BALLOON KID
METROID II: RETURN OF SAMUS

N3DS 3D CLASSICS
3D CLASSICS: KIRBY'S ADVENTURE

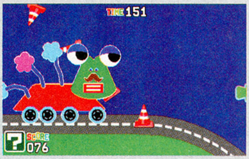
N3DS DOWNLOAD REVIEWS
FREAKYFORMS: YOUR CREATIONS, ALIVE!
MUTANT MUDDS
PUSHMO
VVVVVV

Get the Best on Nintendo 3DS

Build up your Nintendo 3DS digital-game library with our top 40 can't-miss titles from the Nintendo eShop.

BETWEEN DSiWARE GAMES, classic Virtual Console releases, and all-new titles available nowhere else, there are hundreds of downloadable options available for the Nintendo 3DS handheld via the Nintendo eShop. With so many choices, deciding what to buy can be almost overwhelming, especially if you're a new owner who acquired a Nintendo 3DS during the holidays. If you're in that situation, fear not! On the following pages we've assembled a list of the top 40 games you should consider purchasing from the Nintendo eShop. (And if you're a Nintendo DSi or Nintendo DSi XL user, remember that all DSiWare titles can be purchased from the Nintendo DSi Shop, as well.) —**CHRIS H. & PHIL T.**

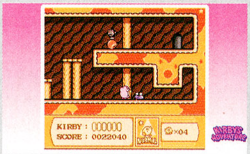
NINTENDO 3DS DOWNLOADS



Freakyforms: Your Creations, Alive!

Nintendo, $6.99

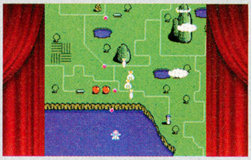
With this game's expansive character-creation mode, you can design the video game hero that you've always wanted to control. Leading your new star through the ever-expanding world is icing on the cake.



3D Classics: Kirby's Adventure

Nintendo, $6.99

In addition to being the first color Kirby title, this NES classic also marked the first time the puffball used his copy ability. Here's your chance to relive this momentous game in beautiful 3D.

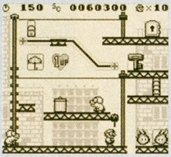


3D Classics: TwinBee

Nintendo/Konami, $4.99

This vertically scrolling shooter is just as action-packed as it is adorable. Enemies attack you from both the air and the ground, so be sure to grab as many bell power-ups as you can to increase your odds of survival.

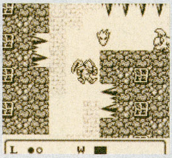
NINTENDO 3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



Donkey Kong

Nintendo, $3.99

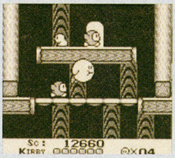
Far more than just a Game Boy port of the classic arcade hit, this version of Donkey Kong adds new play mechanics, nearly 100 extra stages, boss battles, puzzle elements, and more.



Gargoyle's Quest

Capcom, $3.99

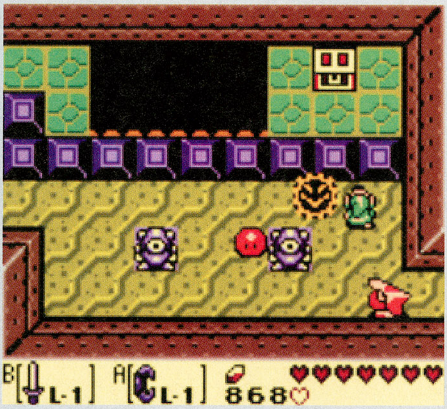
Gargoyle's Quest turns the villain of Capcom's classic Ghosts 'n Goblins series into a hero in a game that features an unusual mix of side-scrolling action and top-down RPG-style exploration.

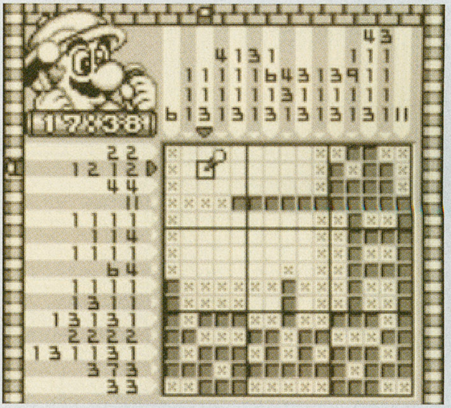


Kirby's Dream Land

Nintendo, $3.99

We've been Kirby fans for nearly 20 years now, and this is where it all started. The little guy's original adventure may seem simplistic compared to his recent outings, but this is still a well-designed platformer.





The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX

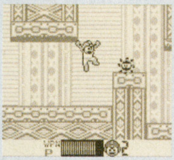
Nintendo, $5.99

Link's first adventure for a portable system remains one of his best. It's full of the action, exploration, and puzzles you expect from a Zelda game, but with a whimsical style that's uniquely its own.

Mario's Picross

Nintendo, $3.99

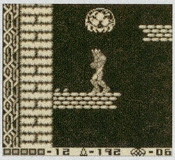
One of the most addictive puzzle games ever made, Mario's Picross will keep you busy for weeks as you use numeric clues to reveal simple drawings. There are more than 250 puzzles in all.



Mega Man: Dr. Wily's Revenge

Capcom, $3.99

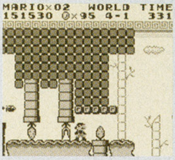
Borrowing elements from the Blue Bomber's NES adventures, Mega Man: Dr. Wily's Revenge boasts the series's trademark weapon-swapping gameplay, great level design, and relentless difficulty.



Metroid II: Return of Samus

Nintendo, $3.99

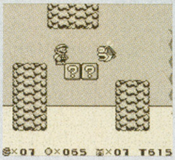
Picking up right where the NES original left off, this portable sequel sees Samus travel to planet SR388, the homeworld of the Metroids. Her mission is to wipe out the alien menace and their evolved forms.



Super Mario Land

Nintendo, $3.99

Mario's first Game Boy adventure is a new twist on a familiar premise. While in Sarasaland, Mario encounters bizarre new enemies, unusual power-ups, and segments in which he pilots a submarine and a plane.

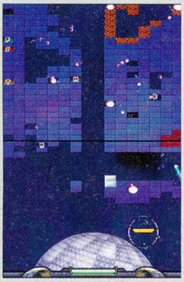


Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins

Nintendo, $3.99

Super Mario Land 2 was the definitive Mario adventure on the Game Boy. You'll explore a variety of worlds—from undersea to outer space—and do battle with Wario in the mischief-maker's first appearance.

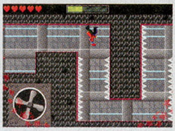
DSiWARE



AlphaBounce

Mad Monkey Studios, $4.99

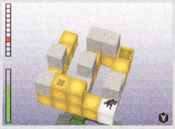
Combining an Arkanoid-style block-breaker with an adventure game may seem like an odd choice, but it works perfectly here. Ample power-up items and millions of levels give this game plenty of depth.



Antipole

Saturnine Games, $4.99

Antipole isn't just another platformer. It's a platformer in which you can temporarily reverse gravity to creatively defeat enemies and overcome obstacles. Quick thinking is key to survival.



Art Style: precipice

Nintendo, $4.99

There are several Art Style DSiWare games available, but this one is arguably the best. Your goal in this simple platformer is to ascend a tower while avoiding a barrage of falling blocks.

BONUS
10
416.2

Aura-Aura Climber

Nintendo, $1.99

In Aura-Aura Climber you use your grapple arm to propel yourself as high into the sky as you can. It's a simple concept, but the tight controls and balanced challenge push you to top your high score.

Cave Story

Nicalis, $9.99

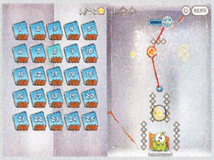
You'll find Cave Story atop almost any critic's downloadable games list. Inspired by the hits of yesteryear, the game is chock-full of action, quirky characters, and a wonderful sense of discovery.

LIFE
PRESENT
ENERGY

Chronos Twins

EnjoyUp Games, $4.99

Chronos Twins challenges you to simultaneously control two characters—one in the past on the bottom screen, and one in the present on the top screen. To say it's unique is an understatement.



Cut the Rope

Chillingo, $4.99

Cut the Rope's premise—you sever ropes to deliver candy to an adorable monster—is simple, but it's also challenging and a lot of fun, especially if you want a perfect score in each stage.

Dark Void Zero

Capcom, $4.99

The first thing you must do in Dark Void Zero is blow into your N3DS to start it—a perfect way to pay tribute to its NES inspiration. More than a gimmick, this neo-8-bit game plays like the real deal.

Divergent Shift

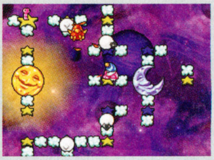
Konami, $7.99

Divergent Shift is a platformer with a brain-scrambling twist—you control not only the protagonist, but a mirrored version of her as well. You'll have to use them both in tandem to survive.

Dragon Quest Wars

Square Enix, $4.99

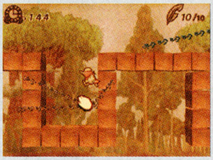
The beloved RPG series is reborn as a strategy game. Careful planning and precision movement are required to achieve victory as you maneuver Dragon Quest's memorable monsters around the battlefield.



Dreamwalker

Code Mystics, $4.99

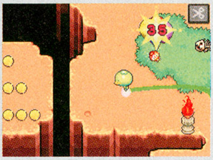
This action-packed puzzle game demands fast reflexes along with quick thinking in order to guide a hapless sleepwalker through a maze of clouds and stars. New items and enemies pop up to keep things fresh.



Ivy the Kiwi? Mini

XSEED, $4.99

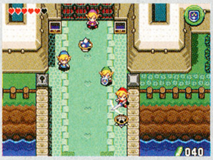
If you haven't picked up the retail version of Ivy the Kiwi?, don't miss out on the budget-priced downloadable release of this puzzle-platformer from Sonic the Hedgehog co-creator Yuji Naka.



A Kappa's Trail

Nintendo, $4.99

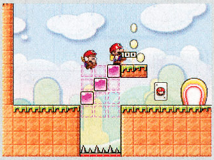
Your stylus skills need to be at their finest for you to guide the titular kappa through a variety of winding roads. The legendary water sprite follows the trail you create and enemies abound, so draw carefully.



The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Anniversary Edition

Nintendo, Free (until 2/20/12)

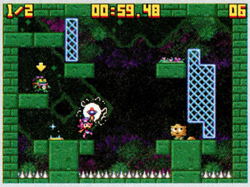
The original Four Swords proved that The Legend of Zelda could translate into a superb multiplayer experience; this version adds new levels and a single-player mode. Plus, it's free!



Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Minis March Again!

Nintendo, $7.99

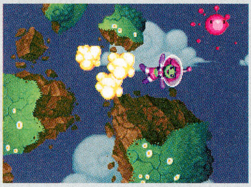
Here's another entry in the popular Mario vs. Donkey Kong series. Guide the robotic Mini Marios through a variety of tricky stages, then create your own levels from scratch.



Mighty Flip Champs

WayForward, $7.99

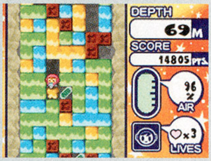
This challenging title forces you to alter the way you look at platformers as you flip each stage between the system's top and bottom screens, completely changing the environment around your character.



Mighty Milky Way

WayForward, $7.99

Luna, the green-skinned star of Mighty Milky Way, is not a girl to mess with. Seriously—she destroys entire planets (and battles a robotic T-Rex) as she makes her way to the exit in each stage.



Mr. Driller: Drill Till You Drop

Namco Bandai, $4.99

Mr. Driller combines a block-matching puzzle game with Dig Dug–inspired action. In addition to the fast-paced Mission mode, the strategic Dristone mode requires lots of thought and careful item management.

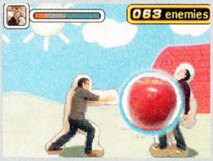
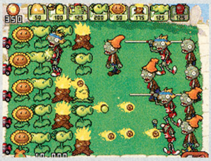


Photo Dojo

Nintendo, $1.99

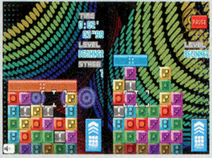
Have you ever wanted to turn yourself (or your best friend, or your sister, or your cat) into a fighting-game character? It's possible in Photo Dojo. The gameplay isn't great, but it's a riot nonetheless.



Plants vs. Zombies

PopCap Games, $7.99

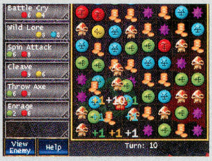
The incredibly popular (and humorous) tower-defense game is now available in convenient downloadable form. Flowers, vegetables, fruit, and nuts are your only defenses against the undead.



Puzzle League Express

Nintendo, $4.99

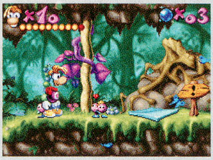
Puzzle League is one of the finest puzzle games ever created, and this is version is perfect for when you have a block-matching itch that needs a scratch. Master forming huge combos for maximum pleasure.



Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords

1st Playable Productions, $7.99

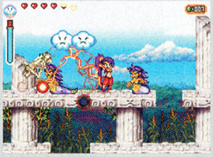
Do you feel as though your puzzle games don't have enough RPG elements? Then Puzzle Quest is for you. Match gems, gain experience, and cast spells to save the kingdom.



Rayman

Ubisoft, $7.99

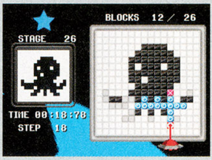
This is a downloadable version of the game that started it all—the platformer that introduced the world to Rayman the limbless wonder. This edition even adds a few exclusive DSiWare features.



Shantae: Risky's Revenge

WayForward, $11.99

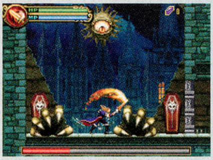
If you get only one game from this list, it should probably be Shantae: Risky's Revenge. Starring a feisty genie, this fully featured 2D action-adventure looks amazing and plays equally well. Don't pass it up.



Snapdots

Nintendo, $4.99

This puzzle game requires you to re-create an image by collecting and launching blocks onto a grid. It starts simple, but the difficulty level quickly ramps up. It can be devious at times, but it's always fun.



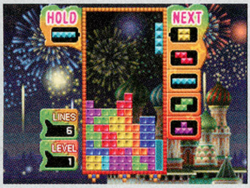
Soul of Darkness

Gameloft, $4.99

To put it nicely, Soul of Darkness is a bit derivative of Konami's Castlevania series. But you know what? That's not a bad thing. If you want a solid 2D Gothic adventure, look no further.

GET CONNECTED

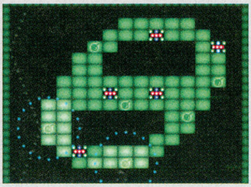
Haven't taken your Nintendo 3DS system online yet? There are two ways to do it. (Either way, make sure the wireless functionality of your Nintendo 3DS system is turned on; there's a switch on the lower-right side of the system.) The simplest connection method is to visit one of the more than 29,000 Nintendo 3DS Hotspot locations (go to www.nintendo.com/3ds/hotspots to find one near you) for an automatic and free connection. Alternatively, you can connect from the convenience of your home or anyplace where you have access to a broadband Internet connection via a wireless router. To do so, enter the System Settings menu, select Internet Settings, then Connection Settings, then New Connection, then Manual Setup, then Search for an Access Point. After the list of access points appears, select the network you want to connect to—you'll have to enter a password if it's secure—then tap OK to save your settings. Finally, you'll be asked to perform a connection test; if it's successful, you're all hooked up and ready to go. (If it doesn't work, head to www.nintendo.com/support for more assistance.) Once you're online, you can visit the Nintendo eShop and engage in other online activities.



Tetris Party Live

Tetris Online, $4.99

Chances are you already own Tetris in some form. But if you need some Tetris and you need it now, Tetris Party Live is an excellent DSiWare version of the seminal falling-block classic.



Trajectile

Nintendo, $4.99

Playing like a hybrid between Arkanoid and Bust-A-Move, Trajectile's basic premise (blow up blocks with carefully aimed missiles) blends perfectly with its cleverly designed stages.

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWARE

Time 7:51
Distance 47
0/5
0.00 lbs

BIG BASS ARCADE

PUBLISHER: BIG JOHN GAMES
GENRE: SPORTS
PRICE: 500 POINTS

Like most of the "casual" fishing games that populate the downloadable-games market, Big Bass Arcade offers a passable approximation of fishing—simplified and rigged for fast/easy catching, of course. Unfortunately, it also offers the standard downside to these sorts of games: no matter how many lures, locations, and species you unlock, you'll still find yourself doing essentially the same thing over and over again. However, the inherent monotony here is tempered by solid motion controls. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE

GNOMZ

PUBLISHER: QUBICGAMES **GENRE:** FIGHTING **PRICE:** 1,000 POINTS

Designed for pick-up-and-play action for up to four competitors, Gnomz features three modes: Smash Match (a standard deathmatch), Capture the Sock (obviously a spin on Capture the Flag), and Socker (a collection contest). Though the colorful character-driven chaos and side-view perspective make Gnomz seem a little like Super Smash Bros., the gameplay is simplified to a fault. There are no weapons or special moves to be found in Gnomz; you defeat your opponents by jumping on their heads. Despite a number of stages and a few power-ups that add some unpredictability, there's little variety in the action, and few tactics you can employ in this game of squash-or-be-squashed. I expect more for 1,000 Wii Points. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE

PINOCCHIO'S PUZZLE

PUBLISHER: ENJOYUP GAMES
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: 500 POINTS

My worry about Pinocchio's Puzzle was that it would be extremely simple and aimed at only the youngest of gamers. Those things are true, but this jigsaw-puzzle game also suffers from unresponsive controls and other annoyances. For example, each puzzle starts with some of the pieces partially overlapping the playfield, which prevents you from placing pieces in those spots until you manually clear the board. Don't bother unless you're the world's biggest Pinocchio fan. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

Time 2:22
Mowed 37%

1950S LAWN MOWER KIDS

PUBLISHER: ZORDIX AB
GENRE: ALTERNATIVE
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Video games can make almost any activity seem fun, but this title doesn't exactly reveal the hidden thrills of lawn-mowing. It's not bad, but it is a bit dull, and you can't scroll the screen while drawing the paths for your mowers, which hampers the experience significantly. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

BLOONS TD

PUBLISHER: DIGITAL GOLDFISH
GENRE: STRATEGY
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Bloons TD achieves a rare feat in tower-defense design: it seems vaguely fresh. It all starts with a cartoonish, balloon-popping premise (no hordes of zombies or robotic killers here) that allows for an atypically interesting tower/weapon arsenal, which includes dart- and boomerang-throwing monkeys. Deployable on-track weapons, such as road spikes, spice things up further. It isn't genius, but it's far better than standard fare. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE

CASTLE CONQUEROR — HEROES

PUBLISHER: CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: STRATEGY
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Hot on the heels of Castle Conqueror—Revolution, Circle offers another base-capture strategy game straight out of the 16-bit era. This time around players (thankfully) command individual units (including banter-prone commanders) while surviving turn-based, grid-style combat. The results are still mixed; the combat and story are engaging, but the glacial pace isn't sufficiently justified by the limited strategic depth. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

Chapter 9
Archer
SCORE
Combo

COME ON! HEROES

PUBLISHER: CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: 200 POINTS/$1.99

Another day, another quasi-strategic war game from Circle. This time around, it's castle defense; you're an archer holding off wave after wave of siege-layers from the walls of your keep. A few upgradeable arrow types and ground traps provide a modicum of depth, but this is essentially an arcade game from 1982 skinned for the castle-defense age. In other words, grab this one only if you consider hitting a shoot button nonstop its own reward. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

DOUBLE BLOOB

PUBLISHER: BLOOBER TEAM S.A.
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Double Bloob could have been a fun update to the Space Invaders formula, but a few things stand in the way. Enemies get lost between the top and bottom screens, making it hard to aim properly, and your default weapon is painfully slow. The animation is lacking, as well; enemies simply disappear. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

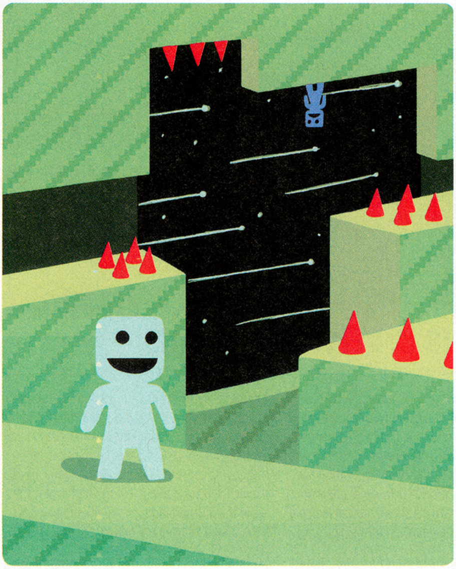
ESCAPE TRICK: CONVENIENCE STORE

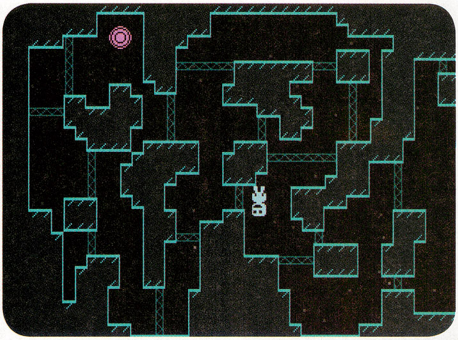
PUBLISHER: INTENSE
GENRE: ADVENTURE
PRICE: 500 POINTS/$4.99

Escape Trick: Convenience Store is flawed in many ways. The writing is laughable at times, and the environmental puzzles can be ridiculously obtuse. In addition, the premise—you're an employee locked in a convenience store—probably won't turn many heads. Nonetheless, the game can be very satisfying when you solve its mysteries. It's definitely more enjoyable than the series's previous entry, Escape Trick: Ninja Castle. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

N3DS DOWNLOAD





VVVVVV

PUBLISHER: NICALIS **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
PRICE: TBD

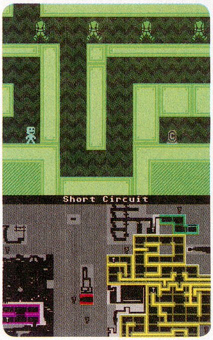
Phil T.'s Pick

We've enjoyed Terry Cavanagh's indie hit VVVVVV on PC for some time now, but it never really occurred to us that we needed a handheld version of the game. Now that we have it, though, we're not sure why we haven't been clamoring for it all along. Its design is perfectly structured for portable play. Not only is it incredibly fun and wildly challenging; it's also structured in such a way that it can be played for an hour straight or in 30-second bursts.

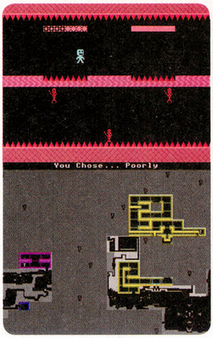
The first thing you'll notice about the game is its striking 8-bit graphics. Although those who grew up playing on a Commodore 64 (the home computer from which VVVVVV takes its visual cues) will get the most appreciation out of its look, the style will charm anyone who digs old-school gaming. Perfectly complementing the graphics is the chiptune soundtrack by Magnus "SoulEye" Pålsson. The tunes are infinitely catchy, and you're bound to find yourself humming them well after you stop playing.

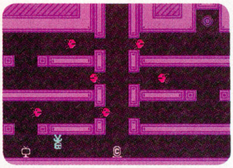
Considering that your character in VVVVVV can't jump, you may need a bit of an adjustment period when you start playing. However, given how expertly the game's gravity-flipping mechanic is implemented, it won't take more than a few minutes to forget about this "limitation." The ability to reverse gravity at will (as long as you're standing on a surface when doing so) allows for clever level design and some devious—and occasionally maddening—challenges. Fortunately, ample checkpoints keep the game's high difficulty from turning frustrating. If you're still being overpowered, though, you can always opt to slow down the action or make yourself invincible (although these cheats should be used only as a very last resort).

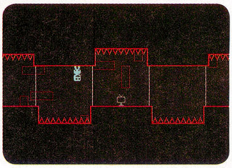
The game's sprawling map lends itself to a fair bit of exploration, and you're allowed to tackle the various "dungeons" in any order you wish. Each area has its own tricks and gameplay variations, constantly forcing you to rethink how you manipulate gravity. There's a lot to love about VVVVVV, and its most noticeable fault is that it's not a terribly long experience. It may take a few hundred lives, but a skilled player can finish the game in three hours or so. Luckily, goodies like Flip mode, time trials, and nearly 20 extra stages are there to keep you busy once you finish the main quest. The No Death Mode bonus is a nice idea, but the thought of completing the entire game without dying is madness.



Even if you've gone through the PC version several times, VVVVVV is certainly worth a replay on N3DS. As mentioned before, it's a terrific game to play on the go, and the subtle 3D effect provided by the handheld adds a layer of depth that goes quite well with the retro-styled graphics. Don't miss this outstanding title.



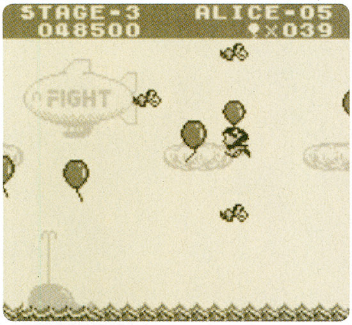




Recommended

EVALUATION STATION

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



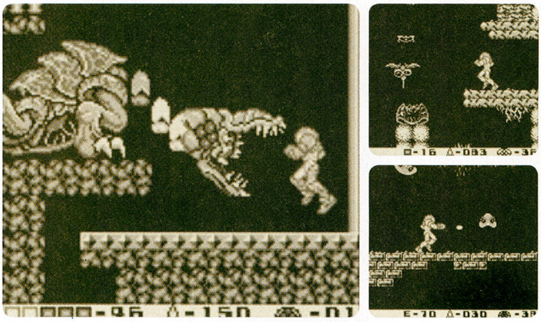
BALLOON KID

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1990 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $2.99

Balloon Kid, the sequel to Balloon Fight, takes the original's Joust-inspired gameplay and expands it, turning a simple arcade high-score contest into a full platformer. Although you spend most of the game floating on balloons, the ability to let go of them at strategic points and inflate new ones after they get popped adds twists to the action. The controls can be a bit, um, floaty, but beyond that, this Kid is good fun. —PHIL T.

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



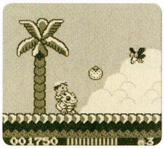
METROID II: RETURN OF SAMUS

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1991 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO **GENRE:** ADVENTURE **PRICE:** $3.99

Metroid II seldom gets the attention that its predecessor and sequel enjoy. Of course, that doesn't mean that it's not a great game. Although more linear than other entries in the series, it still offers plenty of exploration and power-up items to collect. The goal of hunting down and eliminating a set number of Metroid creatures (and their evolved forms) gives the game focus. There are a few minor irritations, though: the large characters and zoomed-in view force you into making the occasional blind jump, and the lack of a map feature can be annoying considering how similar many areas look. Even so, Metroid II is still highly playable, and the battles leading up to the fight against the Queen Metroid are quite thrilling. —PHIL T.

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



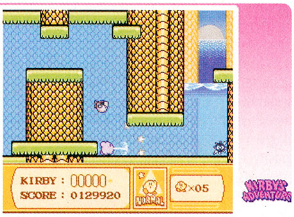
ADVENTURE ISLAND

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1992
PUBLISHER: HUDSON
GENRE: PLATFORMER
PRICE: $3.99

Adventure Island (which is, confusingly enough, based on Adventure Island II for the NES) is enjoyable, but it doesn't hold up as well as other 8-bit titles. You'll adapt to the sluggish jumping after a few levels, and the dinosaur buddies that you ride add a bit of variety with their different attacks, but there's no escaping the fact that most of the stages are pretty dull. It's not bad, just lackluster. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

N3DS 3D CLASSICS



3D CLASSICS: KIRBY'S ADVENTURE

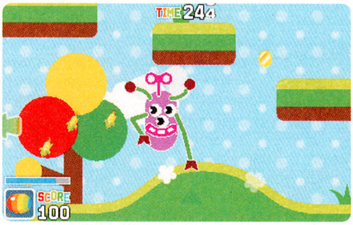
PLATFORM: NES **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1993 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $6.99

Justin C.'s Pick

Of all the 3D Classics, this one is easily my favorite. Not only do you get a portable version of Kirby's Adventure—one of the pink puffball's best games, and the first in which he could copy enemies' abilities—but the 3D effect breathes new life into a nearly two-decade-old title. The way foreground objects pop off the background is simple yet stunning. The only thing I had to grow accustomed to was the small screen size—although that's mainly because I'm used to playing this game on a television and not a handheld system.

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD



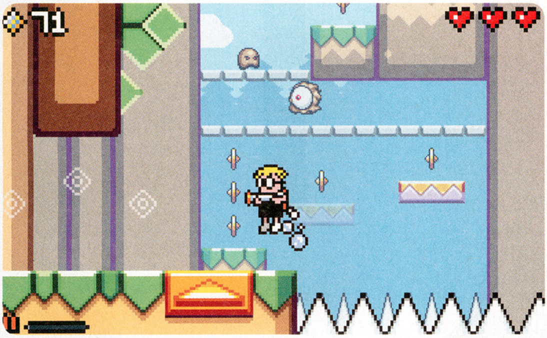
FREAKYFORMS: YOUR CREATIONS ALIVE!

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $6.99

Freakyforms isn't so much a game as it is a toy box that allows you to build your own video game hero. It does a fantastic job of encouraging you to use its simple yet surprisingly versatile character-creation tool to build all sorts of wacky creatures, with frequent rewards such as new parts to use and new areas in which to play. There is a bit of a downside to all of this creativity, however, and that's the harsh fact that the actual gameplay seems to have been a secondary concern. The stylus-based control isn't always precise, and your concoctions are bound to suffer odd glitches like getting stuck in or passing through the environment. Still, you'll have so much fun making new forms and swapping them via StreetPass and QR codes that you won't care. —PHIL T.

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD



MUTANT MUDDS

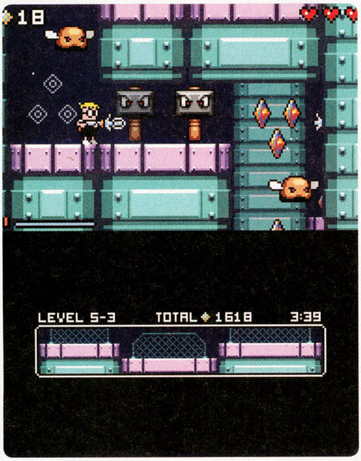
PUBLISHER: RENEGADE KID **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** TBD

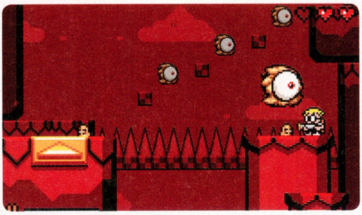
Fans of classic gaming are undoubtedly excited about this sudden renaissance of retro-styled indie titles. Mutant Mudds is the latest homage to the games of the 8- and 16-bit eras, and it does a fantastic job of recreating the feel of a good old-fashioned platformer, most obviously through its graphics. The large pixelated characters, smooth animation, and bright, colorful scenery are instantly appealing. Likewise, the chiptune music is suitably bouncy and memorable. These factors create a nice sense of nostalgia that immediately catches your attention.

There are more than just good memories in here, though. There's a very solid game behind these blocky graphics. Sure, it's not overly complicated—your only abilities are jumping, shooting, and briefly hovering with a jetpack—but there is more here than what you see on the surface. Besides killing the gloppy mud monsters that infest the world, you can collect the 100 Golden Diamonds that are scattered through each stage. Things get more interesting when you notice these diamonds lurking far off in the background. Special arrow pads on the ground allow you to leap into the background and foreground, providing three potential layers of action. It's mechanically similar to Nintendo's Virtual Boy game Wario Land, and the extra bit of exploration that it provides really makes each level more interesting to traverse.

Exploration and homages combine again in the amusing bonus stages hidden within each level. Once you track down each of the secret entrances, you'll find that the extra stages are either in black and white or coated in a red hue, an obvious tip of the hat to the Game Boy and the Virtual Boy, respectively. It's a fun reference to the games that clearly inspired the creators of Mutant Mudds.

The designers also seem inspired by the difficulty of older games. Although it starts out fairly simple, the later stages and the bonus levels can be rather tricky. Unfortunately, the challenges are sometimes a bit unfair. Instead of cleverly designed traps, you'll frequently encounter blind jumps and poor enemy placement. Watch out for beasts that begin shooting at you from offscreen and others that just happen to be waiting for you on the narrow ledge toward which you're hovering. Despite the occasional cheap death, though, Mutant Mudds is still extremely enjoyable. If we see more neo-retro titles of this caliber, we'll be very happy gamers indeed. **—PHIL T.**





Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD

PUSHMO

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: $6.99

Pushmo is a block-based puzzle game with a 3D twist: you grab blocks from a 2D panel, then stretch, push, pull, and climb them as 3D constructs so you can reach the goal at the top of each stage. Toss in a few switches and warp holes, and this concept provides hours of simple-yet-captivating fun. But what (ahem) pushes this title into the Recommended category is that in addition to the nearly 200 built-in puzzles, you're able to create and share your own puzzles and gain new ones via QR codes. **—CHRIS H.**

Recommended

ALSO AVAILABLE

Other recent downloadable WiiWare releases include holiday-themed jigsaw-style puzzle game **Xmas Puzzle** (500 Points) and fitness title **Step Up** (800 Points).... On DSiWare, puzzler **Battle of the Elements** (500 Points/$4.99) and educational game **Play & Learn Chinese** (800 Points/$7.99) are now available.... Two more DSiWare titles based on House M.D. are on offer, as well: **House M.D.—Episode 4: Crashed** (800 Points/$7.99) and **House M.D.—Episode 5: Under the Big Top** (800 Points/$7.99) bring the lackluster TV-show-inspired adventure series to its conclusion.

PREVIEW

2012

With the holiday season behind us, you're probably wondering what's next. That's where your friends at Nintendo Power come in! On the following 35 pages, we'll look at all the biggest games coming to Nintendo's consoles and handhelds in the year ahead.

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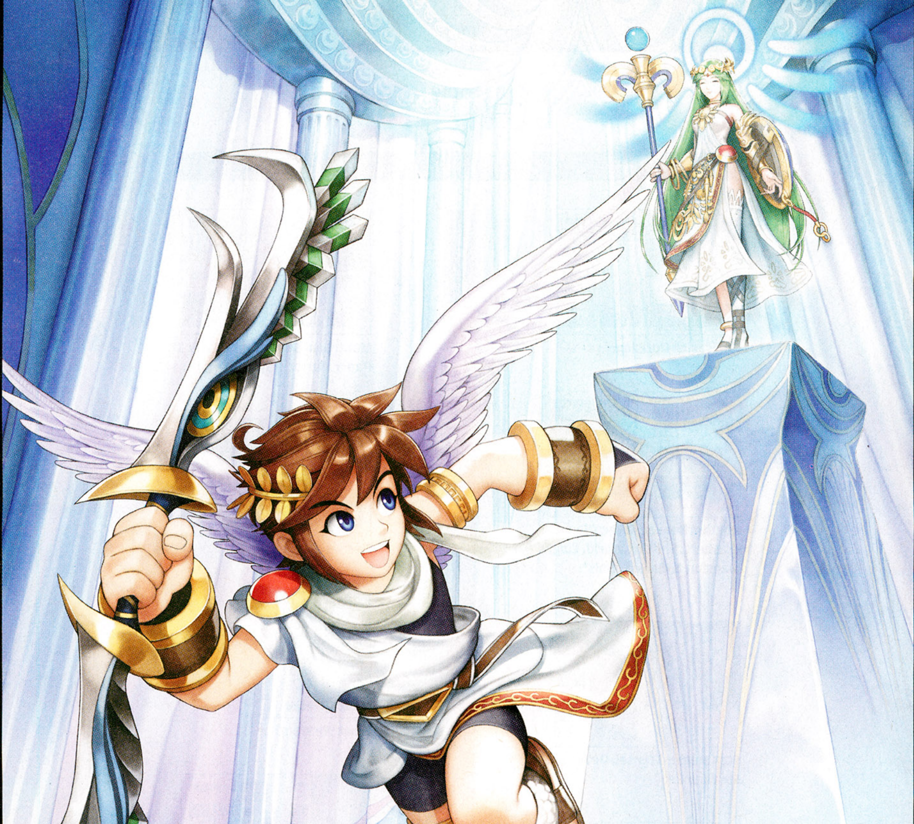
* TENTATIVE TITLE



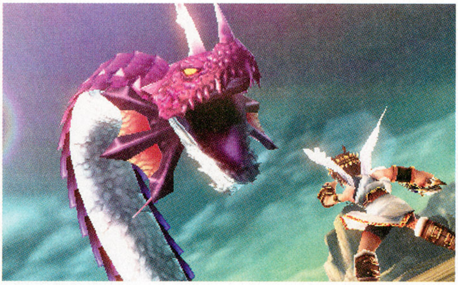
UPRISE AND SHINE

Pit's fans have had been craving a sequel for 20-plus years, and the creator of **Kid Icarus: Uprising** for N3DS is determined to make sure that no one leaves hungry.

BY **CASEY LOE**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO** RELEASE: **MARCH 2012**

N3DS



“I love having freedom in games,” explains Masahiro Sakurai. It’s a sentiment we hear often from game developers, but Sakurai’s unique definition of *freedom* is a large part of what’s made him—and his Super Smash Bros. series—so famous. He explains, “I don’t mean the sort of freedom where you’re thrown into some empty wasteland.... I like to make games that can be enjoyed like a buffet, where players are free to have as much as they want of whatever they want.”

From Sakurai, that’s not an empty promise. His last game, Super Smash Bros. Brawl, featured 36 playable characters, 49 item types, four significantly different game modes, a 258-song soundtrack created by 36 composers, and well over 1,000 trophies and stickers to collect. Whatever motivated you to play it, you found plenty of it.

“It’s very difficult to make all that content, so honestly, you could say that doing so isn’t really to our advantage,” concedes Sakurai. “Nevertheless, we do it every time.” So when Sakurai decided to revive the long-dormant Kid Icarus franchise with Kid Icarus: Uprising, he started laying out the buffet table—dozens of items and powers, scores upon scores of weapons, drivable vehicles, a collectible AR Card minigame, a robust multiplayer mode, and plenty of other features that he hasn’t yet revealed. Oh—and some damn fine action gameplay.

FLIGHT OF ANGELS

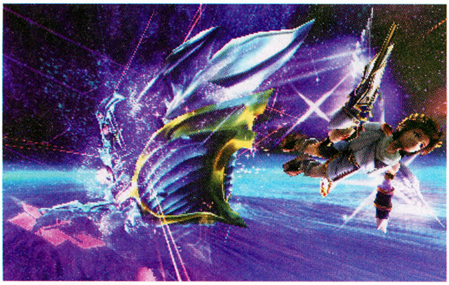
Uprising is structured like a conventional action game, but packed with surprising design decisions. The first is its single-button control scheme, which has one of the player’s hands holding the stylus to the touch screen while the other operates the Circle Pad and L Button. Combined with quick flicks of the Circle Pad, that one button can unleash an impressive repertoire of moves, from charged shots to context-sensitive melee attacks to special moves that accompany forward, backward, or horizontal dashes. Guiding the camera and your targeting reticle with the stylus while moving with the Circle Pad takes some getting used to, but the controls feel weightier and smoother than they did in DS games (like Metroid Prime Hunters) that used a similar scheme.

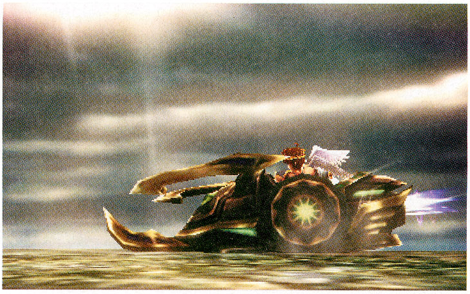
Each chapter begins with Pit in the air, blasting at foes in a guided shooting sequence as his patron goddess Palutena provides the level’s mission briefing. These segments are a nice way to ease into the levels, and they look absolutely stunning in 3D. But the fun truly begins when Pit lands at a large area—anywhere from a medieval castle to an interstellar space-pirate vessel—to freely explore on foot. Our hero can fight with projectile attacks, even hiding behind pillars or rubble in a crude approximation of a cover-based shooter, or he can get his weapons dirty with close-range melee combos and dash attacks. Although players are always free to take their time and explore—and there are plenty of hidden treasures and secret life-restoring hot springs to find—the levels are frenetically paced and full of surprises. Sakurai calls it “escalating the situation”—piling action on top of action to keep players off-balance and fully engaged. One

WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

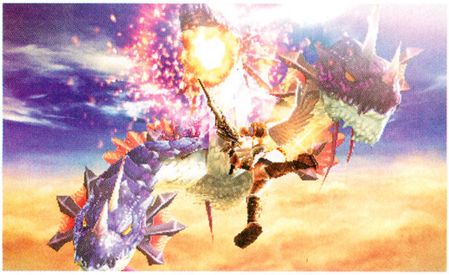
METEOR BOW

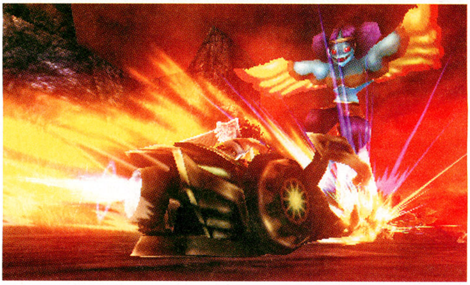
As you might imagine, bows are great at long range but make for crummy melee weapons. Although they don’t fire quite as far as staves, their light arrows have powerful homing properties that make it much easier to pick off distant foes. The Meteor Bow’s heat-seeking triple arrows are a great way to clear a room, and while its charge attack fires only a single, non-homing projectile, it hits with the force of a meteor strike.





What better way for an angel to spread the light of heaven than by mowing down evil with a tripped-out Exo Tank?

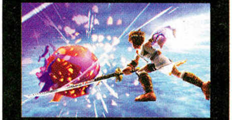




minute you're fighting on foot, then you're riding in a vehicle like the Exo Tank or grinding Sonic-style along magical rails laid out by Palutena. Sometimes NPCs abruptly appear to fight by your side, or recurring villains like Dark Pit pop in for a quick scrap.

WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

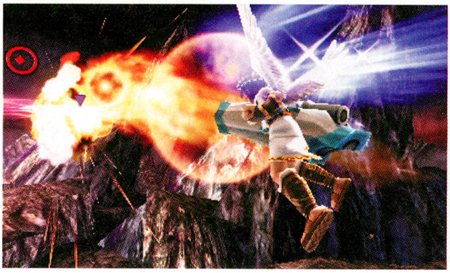
SAMURAI BLADE



Blades are typically well-rounded weapons, dealing solid damage with close-range melee combos and firing heat-seeking projectiles when swung at distant foes. The Samurai Blade tilts toward the melee side of the equation, firing projectiles more slowly than average but making up for it with brutally powerful melee sword combos. Incidentally, the Samurai Blade is the favorite weapon of director Masahiro Sakurai.

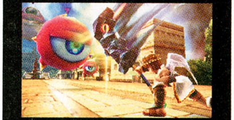
To help make sense of everything that's going on, Sakurai has included a constant stream of dialogue—usually between Pit and Palutena, or Palutena and the villain of the moment. Having characters chat with each other throughout an entire game is the sort of idea that could go horribly, terribly wrong. But thanks to clever writing and strong performances, it works like a charm in Kid Icarus: Uprising. The necessary plot explanations and strategy tips are buried deep within a stream of smart, self-aware banter, like when Pit finds an item from the original Kid Icarus and Palutena remarks that it's less pixelated than she remembers, or a comrade-in-arms expresses shock that Pit would be so reckless as to open treasure chests left in plain sight without suspecting a trap. The playful, teasing Palutena and the enthusiastic, self-deprecating Pit make such a perfect comedy duo that if the whole hero thing ever fell through, the two could probably make a nice living hosting a drive-time morning radio show.

The game's unique storytelling style allows it to establish strong characters and a rollicking plot without ever pulling players out of the action to watch a non-interactive event scene or read a screen full of text. It's a great idea that's wonderfully executed, although at times you almost wish the game would slow down so you could focus a bit more on the story—Palutena seems to be having a lot of fun down on the lower screen, whipping up cute artwork and showing off screenshots from



WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

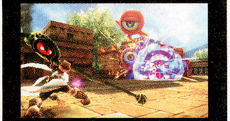
OGRE CLUB



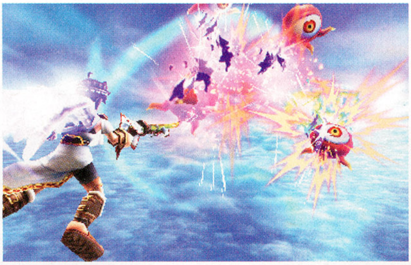
Clubs are so heavy that Pit will need to stop and catch his breath after running even a short distance with one in his hand. But they pack a serious punch at mid-range, allowing Pit to connect for heavy melee damage at ranges from which other weapons would still be firing projectiles. Many clubs can't fire projectiles quickly, but their wide, slow swings are great for knocking back enemy bullets.

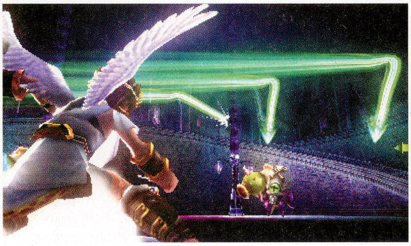
WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

ANCIENT STAFF



Staves are the ultimate long-range weapons, capable of firing bursts of magic energy straight and true. But you'll have to be a crack shot to take advantage of their extremely long range—unlike most other weapons, staff shots have no homing properties. The powerful charged shot of the Ancient Staff unleashes a giant magical seal that can pummel foes repeatedly as it soars through the sky.





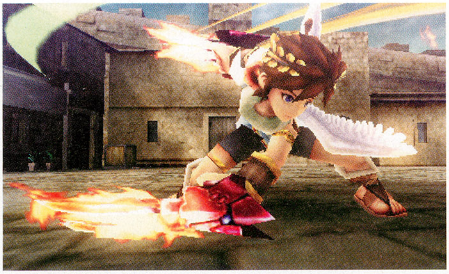
the original Kid Icarus to remind Pit of how enemies used to look. But the game rarely gives you a chance to peel your eyes away from the action unfolding above.

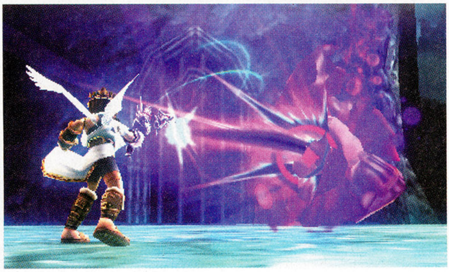
ARMED UPRISING

For all its innovations, Kid Icarus: Uprising is still a stage-clear action game, and that genre is notorious for a lack of longevity. We're not sure how long the main story will be (we've played as far as Chapter 8, with no end to the game in sight), but it's already clear that Kid Icarus: Uprising won't be the sort of game you play through once and then set on a shelf. The secret to the game's replayability is its massive arsenal; we don't know how deep it goes, but we've already seen more weapons then anyone could realistically hope to use in a single trip through the game. It's an amount of gear that you'd expect to see in something like a massively multiplayer RPG, except Kid Icarus: Uprising dispenses with all the vanilla Wooden Bow and Steel Sword +1 sorts of weapons and skips straight to the unique, legendary, superpowered stuff like clubs the size and shape of the Tower of Babel, and cannons that seem to cause thermonuclear explosions with a single charged shot. Yes, either of those could be the first weapon you ever find in the first chest you ever open.

The weapons are broadly divided into nine different categories, and when you switch to a new weapon category, it almost feels like you're playing an entirely different game. With a bow in hand, Pit feels like the ship in a more-conventional shooting game, firing projectiles in spread patterns and aiming charged power shots with pinpoint accuracy. With a blade in hand, you might as well be playing Ninja Gaiden, tossing waves of what feel like shuriken at distant targets and cutting up nearby enemies with rapid melee combos. Switching from a projectile-based weapon like the staff to a massive, screen-spanning club feels delightfully absurd in a game that was all about filling the screen with bullets a moment ago; now you're knocking foes aside with satisfying thunks and hitting back enemy bullets like a major-league ballplayer.

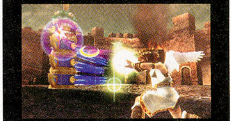
Nine weapon categories would be plenty, but Pit's arsenal has a lot more to offer than that—each of the categories includes a plethora of individual weapons, some with radically different properties. For example, the Burst Blade unleashes





WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

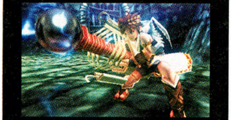
MIDNIGHT PALM



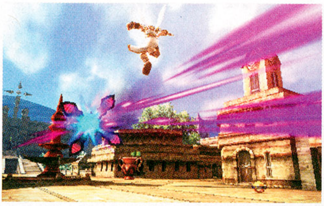
Palms aren't so much weapons as they are magical runes that wrap around Pit's hand. Their projectiles fire quickly, home in on foes skillfully, and are ideal weapons for mid-range combat. The Midnight Palm is a good choice for defensive players who use Pit's back-dash to avoid enemy strikes; the dash causes a giant crescent moon to rise in Pit's wake, repelling further enemy attacks.

WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

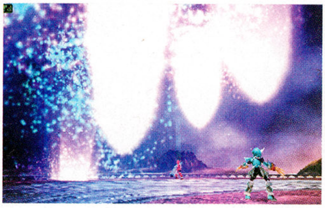
DYNAMO CANNON



Cannons are heavy artillery, with the power of their shells compensating for a slow rate of fire. The shells fly in an arc, which can make them tricky to aim, but pinpoint accuracy isn't a priority—the shells can clear a whole field of foes when they detonate. A charged shot from the Dynamo Cannon creates a giant static explosion that sends electricity lancing through foes to inflict repeated damage and—if you're lucky—paralyze the survivors.



Mundane powers like the Sky Jump can be used repeatedly, but a Meteor Shower is best saved for emergencies.



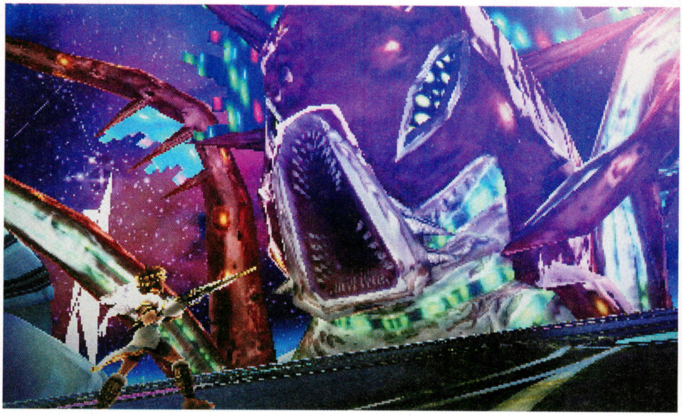
a flurry of short-range bullets that are great for clearing a room, while the Viper Blade fires smaller, longer-range bullets that poison their targets. The Samurai Blade is weaker at long range but has a fast and deadly melee combo, while the Royal Blade is a bit weaker on offense but unleashes a deadly blast attack to cover your escape whenever you dash backwards to evade a foe. There's no best weapon—just the best weapon *for you*.

But before you can use them, of course, you have to acquire them. Each time you play a level, you can find a random weapon or two from treasure chests, and you can also collect hearts that allow you to buy weapons from a random assortment available at Arm's Altar, the area where you spend your time between levels. (Arm's Altar also offers a handy practice range where you can try out your weapons before you commit to using them in real combat.)

Still not enough variety? Worry not, because the weapon system goes even deeper by adding a random assortment of special abilities to each iteration of a weapon. So my particular Royal Blade could provide a small defensive boost, an extra bullet on side-dash attacks, and a chance to paralyze foes, while yours offers a speed boost, an improved combo attack, and longer-ranged shots. There's a nearly infinite number of randomly generated variations, and when you find a good one, you can pass a "seed" of it around via StreetPass to allow your friends to buy it in their own games.

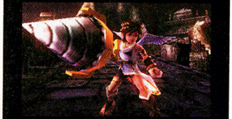
In addition to weapons, Pit can pick up single-use items, such as a centurion that follows him around firing arrows at foes, or a shield that protects his flank from enemy attacks. He can also find magical powers that, like weapons, may be equipped between levels. Powers range from offensive attacks like summoning a meteor shower or firing a massive laser beam, to defensive ones like a high-jump or the ability to recover some health. Each power takes up a certain amount of space on Pit's power grid, and can be found in high- and low-level versions. You can bring only as many powers into combat as you place on the grid, and each equipped power can be used a certain number of times per chapter.

There are many ways to approach the main game—you can continu-



WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

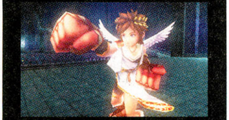
DRILL ARM



Arms strap over one of Pit's hands, and can be used for pummelling foes at melee range or launching powerful projectiles at distant targets. Their range is short in melee and they don't fire quickly, but they're among the game's most powerful weapons at any range. The Drill Arm is certainly no exception; when its twisting charged shots hit their mark, they entrap and continuously shred their target.

WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

BRAWLER CLAWS



Claws are the game's shortest-range weapons, but they fire projectiles rapidly and can unleash quick, lengthy combos at close range. The Brawler Claws are a fantastic choice for tight areas; a charged shot that basically unleashes a shotgun blast of swinging fists, and a melee combo that can keep foes off-balance. The weapon's lightweight construction leaves Pit unencumbered and able to move quickly without tiring.

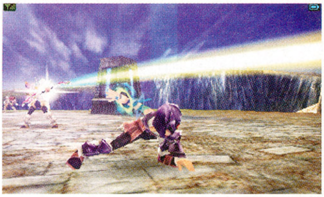
ously replay levels to gather hearts and raid treasure chests in search of the best random weapons and powers, or you can race through the game with the tools fate gives you. Sakurai hinted at high-level challenges to give players good reasons to hunt down the best gear, saying "We've added a certain unique system to address the original game's reputation for being quite challenging," but he wouldn't give away more than that.

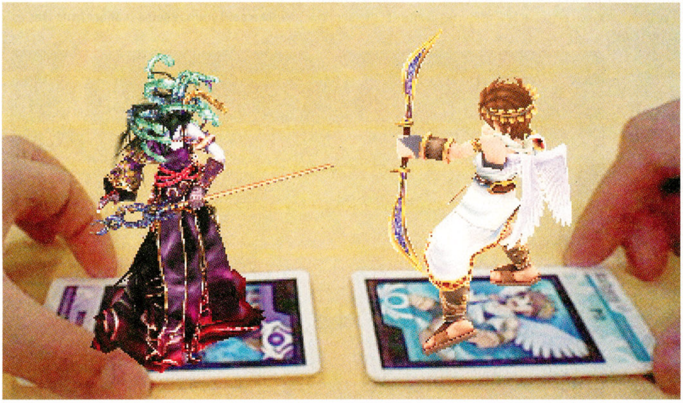
PITTING PIT AGAINST PIT

Besides the main quest, Sakurai has revealed a few additional modes of play. One is a multiplayer game that allows players to battle three-on-three, divided into a light team and a dark team. At first the game is a pure deathmatch in which each team tries to decimate the other. Whenever a player is killed and reborn, his team loses a bit of energy from a communal bar. When the bar hits zero, the final character to fall is reborn as an angel—either Pit or Dark Pit—and the enemy team has a new goal: hunt down the enemy angel to win the game. But the other two teammates become immortal at this point, giving them a good opportunity to even the odds by emptying the enemy team's bar.

For a less intense challenge, players can mess around with the game's AR Cards, which were originally intended to be the Kid Icarus equivalent of Super Smash Bros.'s trophies. By placing a card on a table and viewing it through the camera of the N3DS, the character it depicts will come to life as a hologram. By facing two cards together, you can make the characters fight. Nintendo hasn't yet announced how the physical cards will be distributed, but gathering them will apparently unlock additional content in the game, as well. (We're told it's nothing that couldn't be unlocked through standard play, however.)

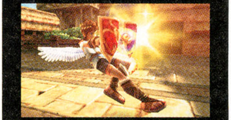
Why exactly does such a full-featured game need multiplayer modes, AR Card mini-games, and whatever the heck else Sakurai has planned? They're just another dish at the buffet—have as much or as little as you want.





WEAPON SPOTLIGHT

GUARDIAN ORBITARS



Orbitars are perhaps the game's strangest category of weapons. They consist of two (usually) spherical objects that float near Pit's shoulders. At long range, each fires a projectile that can add up to heavy damage against distant foes. At melee range, their shoulder positioning lends itself to powerful side-dash attacks. The Guardian Orbitars are more defensive than other Orbitars, unleashing an enemy-repelling wall of force for their charged shot.

KID STUFF

Director Masahiro Sakurai discusses Kid Icarus's enduring appeal and the challenges of reviving a 25-year-old franchise in the modern era.

NINTENDO POWER Can you tell us a little about the team working with you on Uprising? Which titles have they contributed to previously?
MASAHIRO SAKURAI The members of the development team come from a wide variety of backgrounds. We have people with experience working on large-scale projects, and people who have worked their way up from smaller ones. We have veterans who've been around since the 8-bit days, and new hires working their first-ever jobs. Personally, I've been in the business for 20 years now.

What do you feel are the key elements of the Kid Icarus franchise that needed to be retained for Uprising?
Kid Icarus came out in 1986, the same year as The Legend of Zelda. Between then and now, these sorts of adventure games have tended to become more serious, but Kid Icarus still leaves an impression of being a more humorous, anything-can-happen sort of game. So we've tried to preserve that sense of humor, and not have it end up like all those other games where you're dealing with some sort of dire, dramatic crisis. We've also been very fastidious about the music. And we've added a certain unique system to address the original game's reputation for being quite challenging.

Conversely, what were the main ways you wanted to evolve the series and put your own stamp on it?
As you can see, our Kid Icarus is now a completely different genre. It's been 25 years since the series began, so we wanted to evolve it dramatically, but in a way that would feel appropriate. Nobody's happy when a developer makes dramatic changes based on their personal whims, and I assure you our changes have been made with a great deal of respect for the original game.

Playable demos have been available to the media and the public at various events, like E3 and Comic Con. What kind of feedback have you received from those shows and has it informed the game's development at all?
Every time we've exhibited a playable build of the game I've had deep misgivings about showing it in such an unfinished state. Bringing our vision for this game to its full fruition is our top priority, and I'm confident that when we deliver the final game it will be a dramatic improvement over what we've shown previously.

From what we've seen so far, Uprising seems to be quite story-driven. How important do you feel storytelling is to the overall experience?
In this game, there's a ton of talking. Pit has a constant back-and-forth going with friends and enemies alike. But what I really want to stress is that we didn't add all that voice in order to tell a story. Personally, I think that movies and such are much better at telling stories in an effective and enjoyable way than games are.

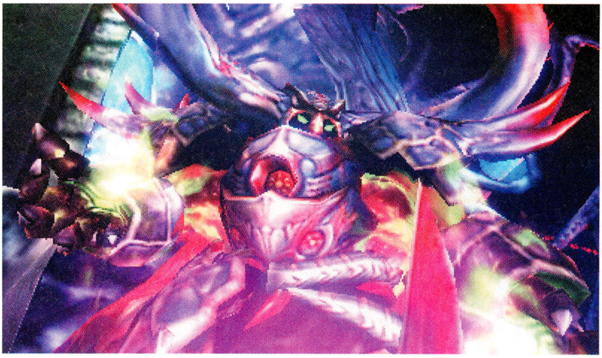
The main reason for having all the dialogue in this game is "escalating the situation," using dynamic scene changes to make the shooting sequences more enjoyable. The story is the framework for the changing scenes. And while there is a story, we don't advance it by forcing players to sit and watch some tedious briefing scene or anything. Pit goes straight to the battlefield, and he hears about the mission objectives as he's fighting.

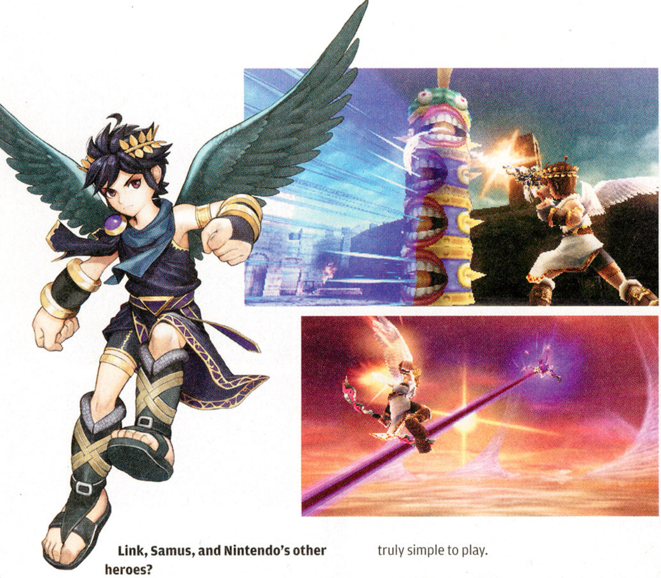
How much did the original Greek myth of Icarus influence the game and, in particular, its narrative?
None whatsoever. The game is based on the world that was created for the original Kid Icarus. Of course, there are many aspects of that world that were inspired by Greek mythology.

It was announced that Nintendo would be partnering with various animation studios to create Kid Icarus shorts. Did you collaborate on those at all?
I have been heavily involved since the early stages, and regularly supervised their progress. But I didn't want to kill the unique flavor of each animation studio, so I wasn't giving the sort of explicit directions that I was on the game itself.

Between all the different weapons, the power grid, and variable weapons stats, there's almost an RPG level of depth to the gameplay. Was that a focus for you all along or is it something that gradually emerged during development?
The amount of weapons and item types was decided from the start. We don't make additions to things like the number of chapters and modes either. (However, some things do get cut.) Development won't go smoothly if the team doesn't know what goals they have to meet, so we have to figure out exactly how much content we're going to make at the very beginning of the project.

What would you say sets Pit apart from Mario,





Link, Samus, and Nintendo's other heroes?

Fundamentally, most of those characters were designed to be a projection of the player's emotions, so they don't express a lot of personality. I'm a fan of that style of character design myself, and have designed characters like Kirby to be a similar blank slate. But with this game, we went in the opposite direction, going for a bright, chatty character who always has someone to talk to. Making another character in the vein of a Mario or Link would have been pretty dull, considering how many characters like that are in the lineup already... And come on: flying at high speeds and bickering with gods and goddesses—that's gotta make him the coolest Nintendo character there is, right?

What do you think stereoscopic 3D brings to the experience?

I've become so accustomed to 3D that now it's 2D games that strike me as being hard to play. This game has ranged attacks, so being able to sense distances is very important, and I recommend that it be played in 3D. The gameplay is very intense, so it might be a little tricky to get used to at first, but please stick with it!

Can you talk a little bit about the genesis of the AR Card battles? Are you a fan of collectible-trading-card games yourself?

Originally, we were planning for something along the lines of the trophies in the Smash Bros. series. But when we learned what the N3DS would be capable of, we started to wonder if there might be a more interesting way of approaching the collectables. That's how we hit upon the idea of using AR, and having the cards battle each other.

I do appreciate the joys of collecting things like trading cards, but I was worried that [a trading-card game] might be a little too complicated. That's why we made the AR battles into something truly simple to play.

As a big fan of classic games, are there any other long-dormant franchises or characters that you'd like to bring back?

If there were such a character, I might be planning its revival for the next Smash Bros. game. Maybe I have someone in mind?

You know, you could probably say that I'm the best in the world when it comes to giving second acts to classic video game characters. That's mostly due to Smash Bros., and now I can't believe that I'm doing the same thing with Kid Icarus!

What sorts of SpotPass and StreetPass features will Kid Icarus: Uprising offer?

You can exchange something called weapon seeds. A seed contains the information about a weapon, and you can recreate it [in your own game] by spending hearts.

This game has a huge variety of weapons, and with this feature it's possible to get your hands on absolutely ridiculous weapons. Each weapon has a "value," and in a multiplayer game, the amount of power your team loses when you're defeated varies based on that number. Players are free to hunt down the strongest weapons they can for the single-player game, but we've made balance a priority in the multiplayer mode.

Before we finish, is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about Kid Icarus: Uprising?

The dialogue in the Japanese version of the game is quite funny, but I don't know quite what to say about the foreign version. If our players in North America are able to thoroughly enjoy it, then the credit for that goes to the staff at Nintendo of America.

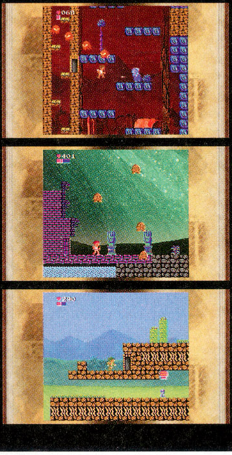
This was a really challenging game to make. And, by the standards of portable games, I've tried to make it just as challenging for you to play (although it is quite accessible to beginners). I hope you'll enjoy it!

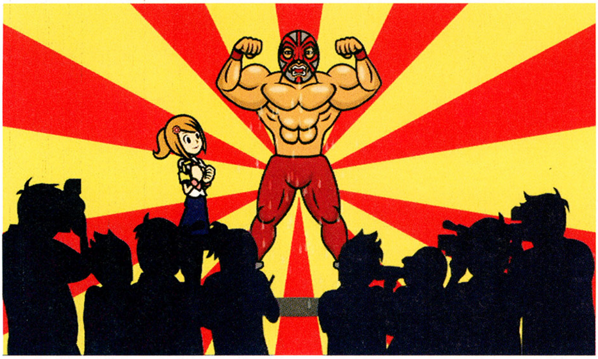
Finally, we figure you probably can't talk about this too much, but we have to ask: have you started thinking about the next Smash Bros. title and the overall direction you want to take with it?

I can't really say anything until things settle down with Kid Icarus... And a lot of it will depend on the team that I end up assembling for Smash Bros. It may take a while, but I think that your patience will be rewarded.

RETURN FLIGHT

Whether you're a graying NES fan looking to recapture a lost childhood or a young 'un with a proper respect for the classics, Nintendo has good news for you! A 3D Classics version of the original Kid Icarus is coming to the Nintendo 3DS in early 2012, and it's packing a few cool upgrades. Most noticably, the empty black backgrounds of the original have been replaced with some new (but still retro-flavored) backdrops, each designed for optimal 3D enjoyment. Secondly, the game now has an optional alternate control scheme in which Pit can fire arrows more quickly, making a very hard game a whole lot easier. Give it a try and see what all the fuss is about!



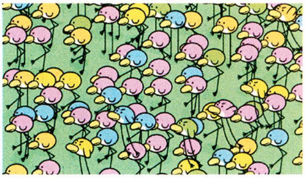


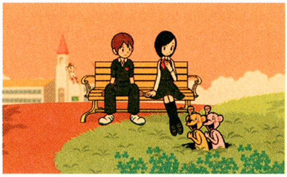
RHYTHM HEAVEN FEVER

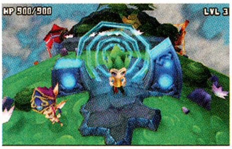
PLATFORM: Wii | **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO | **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO | **RELEASE:** FEBRUARY

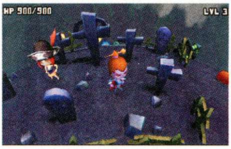
Last issue we looked at the first eight wacky minigames in Rhythm Heaven Fever. Those toe-tapping events simply weren't enough, however, so we had to see what else is in store for Wii owners seeking a musical challenge. Among the games we played was Working Dough, in which you control anthropomorphic globs of dough that must jump in time with the beat to bounce falling balls into a receptacle. The fast-paced Air Rally has you (as a dog) playing a game of badminton against a cat—each from the open cockpits of their airplanes. Don't get distracted by the frequent cloud cover.

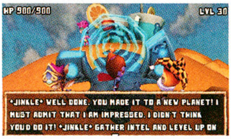
We also encountered a couple of muscle-bound minigames. In Figure Fighter, you use a pump to bulk up a scrawny action figure as it hits a punching bag, and Ringside has you controlling a professional wrestler who must growl, flex, and pose after receiving specific musical cues from an interviewer and a crowd of reporters. After every four minigames, a special Remix stage blends those previous segments into an ultimate showdown. Sure, Rhythm Heaven Fever serves as a reminder that we lack rhythm, but we're still looking forward to playing more.—**PHIL T.**











JINKLE WELL DONE. YOU MADE IT TO A NEW PLANET! I MUST ADMIT THAT I AM IMPRESSED. I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D DO IT! *JINKLE* GATHER INTEL AND LEVEL UP ON

PLANET CRASHERS

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** UTV IGNITION GAMES | **DEVELOPER:** RENEGADE KID | **RELEASE:** MARCH

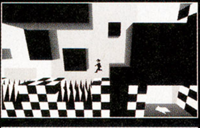
As a recent grad from the Planet Crasher Academy, you're requested to defeat an unknown foe that seeks to extinguish a sun. Of course, you can't just zip off to the other side of the galaxy—this is an RPG, after all, and you need to level up first. After customizing your character, you head out into the world—a small planet called Lush Greenie—and take on quests from a board and/or random strangers. Many of these tasks require you to find specific items in enemy-filled dungeons, so you'll have to participate in numerous turn-based battles to reach said items. —**JUSTIN C.**

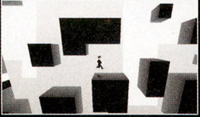
APOCALYPSE NOW!

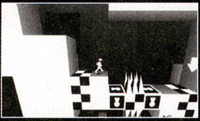
2012 isn't just gonna be a great year for video games. As everyone knows, according to the ancient Mayan calendar, it's also the year that the world will end. Hey, if it wasn't true, why would Columbia Pictures have made a movie about it? But how, exactly, will the world meet its grim fate? Video games have given us insight into how the final days may unfold. Keep your emergency rations handy and prepare yourself for any of these cataclysmic scenarios in the coming year.

BAD MOON RISING (as seen in The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask)

There are few "end of the world" scenarios more world-ending than having two planetary bodies collide. That's the unfortunate fate that awaits Termina when the power of Majora's Mask threatens to bring the moon crashing into the world's surface. The fact that the moon has a creepy face makes it even more intimidating as it grows ever larger in the sky.



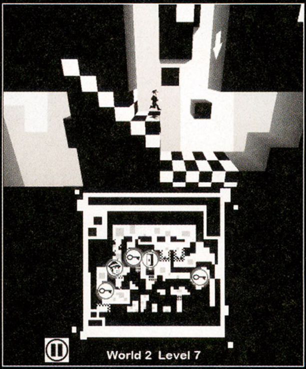




SHIFTING WORLD

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **AKSYS GAMES** | **DEVELOPER:** **FISHING CACTUS** | **RELEASE:** **SPRING**

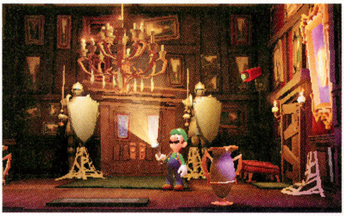
In Shifting World, you find yourself transported to a monochromatic alternate dimension where the normal rules don't apply. The landscape consists of black solid areas that you can stand on and white open areas that you can pass through, but by pressing the L or R Buttons you can flip the world upside down; the solid areas become open, and the open areas become solid (although some checkered areas remain impassible in both phases). In a sense, each level is two levels in one, and by shifting back and forth between them you'll be able to reach places and perform feats that would otherwise be impossible. It might sound a little crazy—and it is—but before long you'll be collecting keys, leaping over pits of spikes, and shifting between 2D and 3D environments. You'll even be able to generate new levels by scanning codes via the system's built-in camera. —CHRIS H.

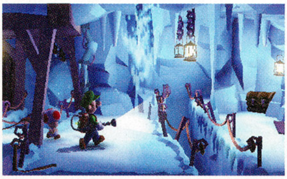


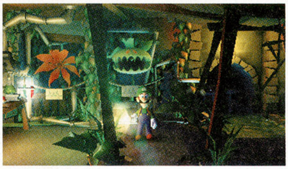
LUIGI'S MANSION 2

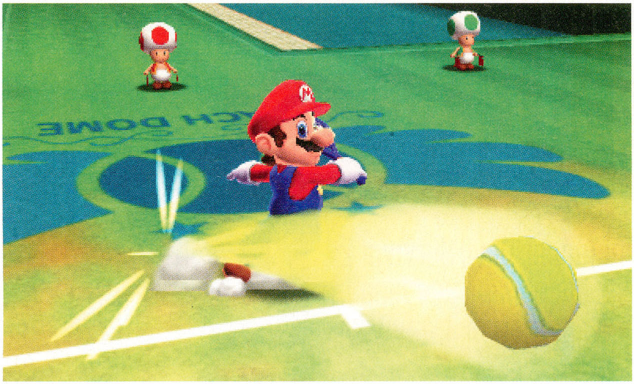
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **NINTENDO** | **DEVELOPER:** **NEXT LEVEL GAMES**
RELEASE: **TBA**

Luigi just doesn't get the respect he deserves. He's helped save the kingdom on numerous occasions and he's even rescued Mario a time or two, but the man in green always seems overshadowed by his spotlight-hogging bro. With any luck, Luigi's Mansion 2 will change all that. In this sequel to the fan-favorite GameCube title, Luigi must once again pluck up some courage and venture into haunted abodes where he'll solve puzzles to locate ghosts wherever they hide—be it inside furniture, behind the wallpaper, or under piles of sand. And finding ghosts is only half the battle; you'll also have to suck them up with the latest in specter-catching technology, the Poltergust 5000. Though the game stays very true to its predecessor, fans can look forward to varied ghost types, multiple themed environments, and new play mechanics—such as stunning enemies with a strobe burst—to keep the action fresh. This one has "spooktacular" written all over it. —CHRIS H.









MARIO TENNIS*

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **NINTENDO** | **DEVELOPER:** **CAMELOT**
RELEASE: **TBA**

Tennis isn't always the most exciting thing around, but developer Camelot has a proven track record of making the sport fun, accessible, and over-the-top with its Mario Tennis titles. The latest iteration looks to continue this trend, and adds 3D visuals to the mix—a perfect fit for the sport, especially given the perspective from which most tennis games are played. In addition to the autostereoscopic screen, this version of Mario Tennis will take advantage of the N3DS system's touch screen and gyros. To what extent remains to be seen, but we have complete confidence in whatever Camelot has planned. —JUSTIN C.

* TENTATIVE TITLE

SURVIVING THE GAME

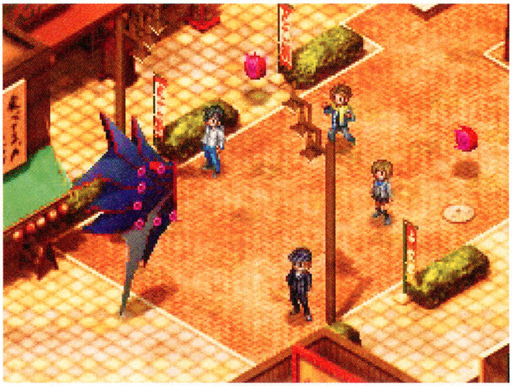
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2 lets you go on tour and see Japan. What's left of it, anyway.

BY **DAVID SMITH**

PUBLISHER: **ATLUS** DEVELOPER: **ATLUS** RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2012** **DS**

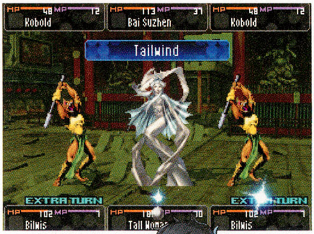
Daichi

Wahhh! This is bad!
This is really bad!

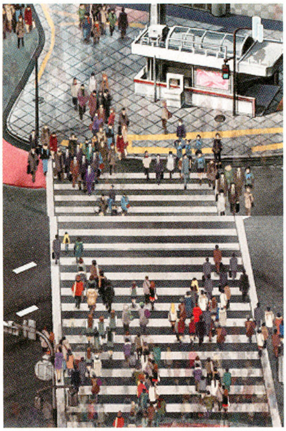


Players of the original Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor will remember day three. Day three was the turning point, when the game went from "whew, tough stuff, but I think I can hack it" to "no, stop, please don't hurt me any more." After having spent a good chunk of time with a near-finished version of the sequel, we can attest that—like it or not—Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2 continues the tradition. Once day three dawns, this game is going to make us work for it.

[Below] Demons are enemies as well as allies.



For those who missed the first game, an explanation might help. Devil Survivor is a strategy-RPG set in the fantasy world of the Shin Megami Tensei series. As the story begins, a strange occurrence throws everyday life into chaos, forcing a few people to confront a world suddenly haunted by marauding demons. Over the course of seven days—the aforementioned third being the one with a kink in the difficulty curve—those people have to master the art of demon-taming and fight their way to something like a peaceful future.



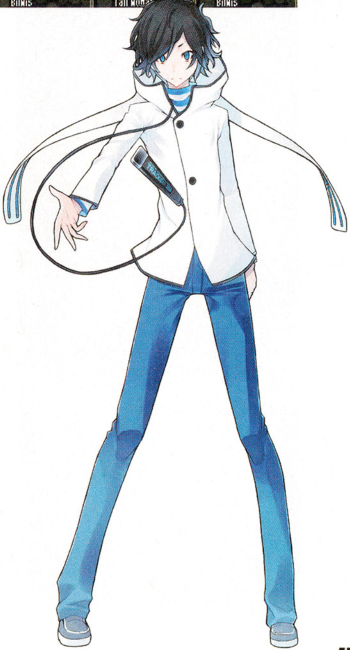
Naturally, the sequel ups the ante. Devil Survivor revolved around a disaster confined to downtown Tokyo. Devil Survivor 2, on the other hand, is happy to let the heroes leave town. They'll visit major cities all across Japan...and they'll find that each one looks as if it's just seen 12 rounds of Godzilla versus King Kong.

What happened? What caused it? Why is the rubble full of monsters? Well, finding out is why we play the game, and from the looks of things, doing so will be worth it.

SEVEN DAYS AND COUNTING

The game begins with three high-school seniors meeting up just before taking their college-entrance exams. One of them shows off a strange website—Nicaea—which supposedly foretells the fate of whomever signs up for an account. A little while later, on the homebound train platform, they each find a video clip in their email, showing them dying in a massive earthquake.

It turns out that Nicaea does two things. Yes, it gives users foreknowledge of their deaths, but it also provides the tools to prevent it. Our heroes gain access to the "demon summoning app," a program for subduing and summoning demons. Thanks to the app and Nicaea, the trio is able to live through the quake, as well as the chaos that follows.



MEET THE SURVIVORS

It's an odd lot that JP's recruits to combat the demon invasion, but most of them are good company in a fight. Here's a rundown of a few key players in Devil Survivor 2.

Daichi Shijima The hero's best pal and sidekick; he's the one who first discovers the Nicaea website. He's kind of a schmo, but he's a lovable schmo, and he'll be part of the team from their very first battle.

Yuzuru Akie He's "Joe" to his friends, but don't ask us why. This cheerfully goofy young office worker falls in with the crew in Tokyo, providing some badly needed humor amid the ruins.

Io Nitta A chance meeting outside their exams brings this high-school student together with our hero. Soon, though, she'll have a personal stake in fighting the crisis.

Jungo Torii A young street tough from Nagoya who becomes one of the party's MVPs. He hits harder than almost anyone else in the game, but outside of a fight he has a softer side.

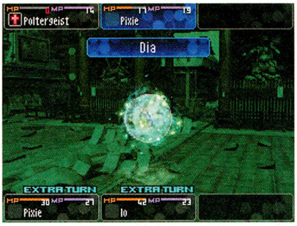
Hinako Kujou A wildly dressed dancer and novice demon-tamer from Osaka. Strangely enough, she doesn't get along so well with some of the more straight-laced members of the team.

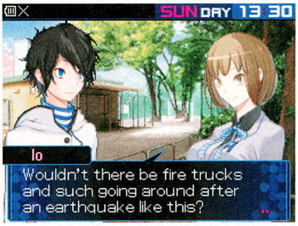
Fumi Kanno We suspect that not many real hackers relax in slinky evening gowns, but that's what fiction is for. Fumi does the computing at JP's headquarters, and she's a strong demon-tamer as well.

Ronaldo Kuriki Leader of a rebellious gang in the Nagoya underground. He and Yamato Hotsuin have some unfinished business left over from Ronaldo's former life as a detective.

Makoto Sako One of the most capable field agents in JP's, and the first to make contact with the team. Despite her dedication, she has some doubts about what her bosses are really up to.

Yamato Hotsuin The latest in a long line of Hotsuin-family patriarchs to run the shadowy JP's organization, Yamato is admirably competent, but he may not have everyone's best interests at heart.





Io

Wouldn't there be fire trucks and such going around after an earthquake like this?

[Left] Tokyo has obviously seen better days. It's up to you to clean up the streets!

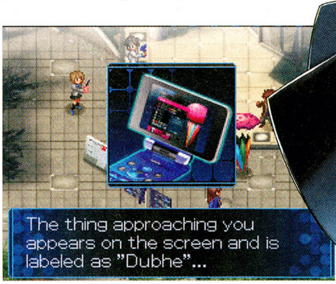
Soon they fall in with JP's (pronounced "jips"), a government agency fighting back against the demons, and by the second day of the crisis they're on missions in cities across Japan. They're also learning the occasional uncomfortable secret—about who they're fighting and about who they're fighting for.

A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

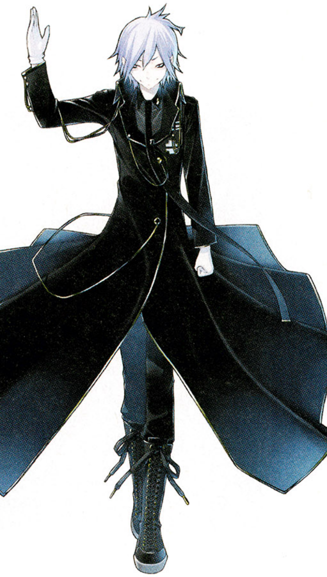
For all this discussion of the plot, most of what you do in Devil Survivor 2 is fight. The game mixes the basic structure of a skirmish-scale strategy game—a square-grid battlefield, turn-based progression—with mechanics from the Megami Tensei RPGs. It's a bit like Pokémon would be if the monsters were big and scary instead of cute and charming. Demons gain power with experience, and they can fuse with each other to spawn new monsters with skills from both their "parents."

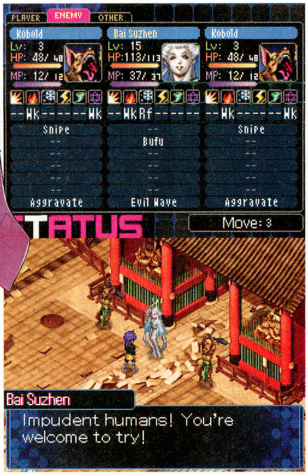
As in the first Devil Survivor game, each party member goes into a mission flanked by a pair of pet demons. Prepping those squads for battle—picking out the right demons, building their levels, tuning their skills to match the enemies'—is nine-tenths of the work that goes into winning.

Do that heavy lifting, and maybe day three won't be so bad after all. In truth, Devil Survivor 2, like the Megami Tensei games in general, is as easy or as hard as a player cares to make it. The battle system rewards success with the chance for even more; hitting an opponent in their weak spot yields an "extra turn"—the chance to hit the



The thing approaching you appears on the screen and is labeled as "Dubhe"...




PLAYER
ENEMY
OTHER
Kobold
Lv: 3
HP: 48/ 48
MP: 12/ 12
Bai Suzhen
Lv: 15
HP: 113/113
MP: 37/ 37
Kobold
Lv: 3
HP: 48/ 48
MP: 12/ 12
Snipe
Bufu
Snipe
Aggravate
Evil Wave
Aggravate
STATUS
Move: 3

Bai Suzhen
Impudent humans! You're welcome to try!

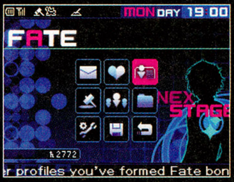
enemy one more time. Fair is fair, though, so the bad guys can seize the exact same advantage. Whoever grabs that initiative first usually goes on to win the fight. Pitting the right strengths against the right weaknesses can turn a merciless battle into a breeze. On the other hand, lazy tacticians will find their battles short and painful. Instead of "hard" or "difficult," the best word to describe the experience might be "unforgiving."

THE LAST DAYS

Smart players will stay alive to find their way through a fascinating story. Devil Survivor 2 has a dense collection of branching plot threads, and the player's moral compass is what leads the way through them to several different endings. Fight for the leaders of the JP's organization, and there might be a heavy cost to saving the world. Rebelling along with their rivals could lead to a better way. Or maybe there's a path that cuts between both factions.

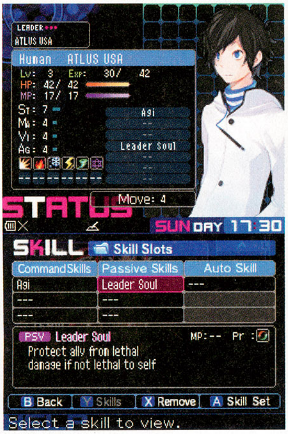
It might be best not to look that far ahead, though. That third day is waiting, after all, and the game doesn't look to get much more forgiving once it's over. Nonetheless, we've enjoyed our time with Devil Survivor 2 thus far. It demands a lot of effort from a player, but between the involvement of the story and the excitement of watching a plan come together in combat, it gives back an equivalent reward. It's tough but fair—the way a good strategy game ought to be.

TEMPTING FATE


MON DAY 19:00
FATE
NEXT STAGE
2772

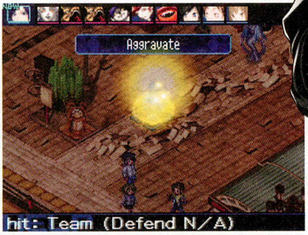
r profiles you've formed Fate bon

Besides just being fun to read, the dialogue between battles in Devil Survivor 2 has some practical consequences. The new game introduces the notion of a "fate level" for each character, starting at zero and climbing as the hero gets to know his allies better. Reaching higher levels unlocks new abilities, such as extra elemental resistance or the chance to fuse a special demon. If you spend some extra time with a favorite ally in the off hours, that ally will be tougher when a battle rolls around.

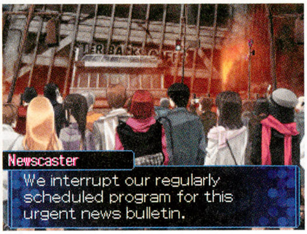

LEADER
ATLUS USA
Human ATLUS USA
Lv: 3 Exp: 30/ 42
HP: 42/ 42
MP: 17/ 17
St: 7
Ma: 4
Vi: 4
Ag: 4
Agi
Leader Soul
STATUS
Move: 4
SUN DAY 17:30
SKILL
Skill Slots
Command Skills
Passive Skills
Auto Skill
Agi
Leader Soul
PSV
MP: --
Pr
B Back
Y Skills
X Remove
A Skill Set

Leader Soul
Protect ally from lethal damage if not lethal to self

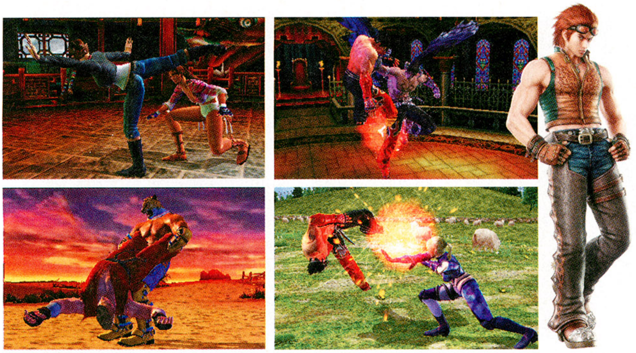
Select a skill to view.



hit: Team (Defend N/A)



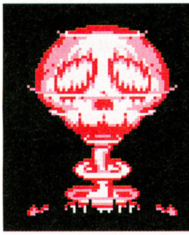
Newscaster
We interrupt our regularly scheduled program for this urgent news bulletin.



TEKKEN 3D PRIME EDITION

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO BANDAI | **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO BANDAI
RELEASE: FEBRUARY

Tekken 3D Prime Edition marks the first time the Tekken series has been on a Nintendo system in more than a decade, and the series is reintroducing itself with a bang. Not only does this entry feature the same deep one-on-one fighting action of the console and arcade iterations of Tekken, but it boasts absolutely stunning graphics and a massive roster of more than 40 playable characters. Though the selection of modes is rather light, the game makes up for it with online play and the inclusion of the feature-length 3D CG movie *Tekken: Blood Vengeance.* —CHRIS H.



APOCALYPSE NOW!

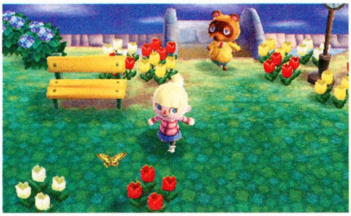
THE MONSTER WITHIN (as seen in Chrono Trigger)

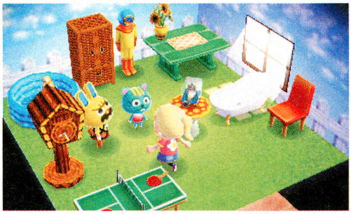
There's nothing worse than having a massive life-force-consuming alien entity sleeping under the Earth's surface—except when that creature wakes up, emerges from the bowels of the planet, and unleashes countless destructive laser blasts that rain down upon the world and reduce society to rubble.

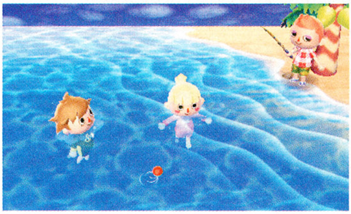
ANIMAL CROSSING*

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
RELEASE: TBA

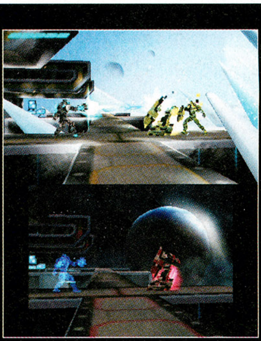
Nintendo's quaint "life simulator" is coming to the N3DS, and although you'll still be able to participate in many of the same activities as in previous installments of the series (like catching bugs and chatting with neighbors), there are plenty of new features as well. Your character now sports more-humanlike proportions, and those longer limbs will be put to good use with the newfound ability to swim and dive in the ocean near your town. Fans of customization will appreciate the ability to alter their characters' pants and shoes in addition to shirts and hats. We're looking forward to seeing what other new goodies await us as we return to Animal Crossing. —PHIL T.







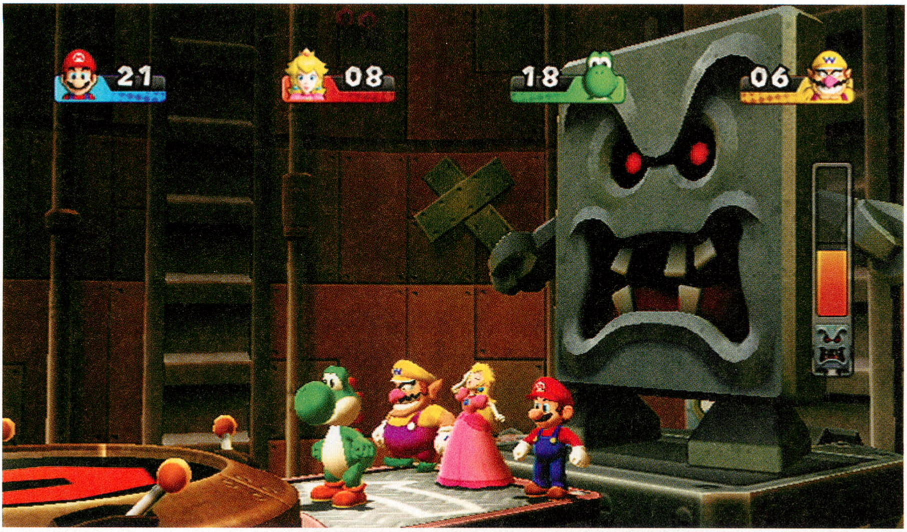
* TENTATIVE TITLE

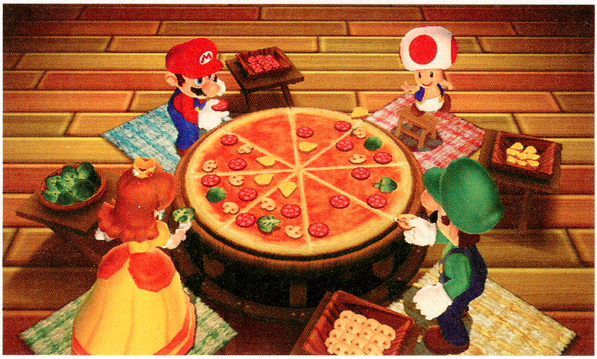


FRACTURED SOUL: DEEP VOID

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** UTV IGNITION GAMES | **DEVELOPER:** ENDGAME STUDIOS
RELEASE: SUMMER

Fractured Soul may not have stereoscopic visuals, but this action title does make good use of the Nintendo 3DS system's two screens. The top and bottom screens show you two different levels—one features you as a tangible human, and the other shows your intangible soul that mirrors the human's actions. You can trade places with your soul by tapping a shoulder button, which is essential for progression. For example, if you encounter a barrier that isn't present on the other screen, you just swap to proceed. —JUSTIN C.





MARIO PARTY 9

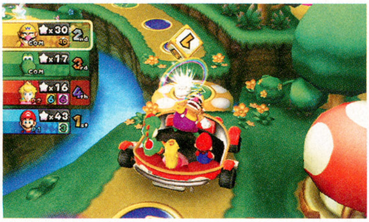
PLATFORM: Wii | **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO | **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO | **RELEASE:** MARCH

Mario Party returns with all-new stages and a slew of new minigames, and we've played a few rounds on two of the ninth installment's new areas. The competition is slightly different from what you might be used to. Instead of moving around the stage separately, all players ride together in a vehicle. Of course, only the player whose turn it is reaps the benefits of landing on a particular space.

The goal is to collect as many Mini Stars as possible before reaching the end of the stage. These prizes are scattered along the path, but you can also earn them by landing on special spaces and competing in minigames. Just watch out for the noxious purple Mini Ztars—they remove Mini Stars from your inventory. Adding a bit of strategy are the various dice block that you can find, including those that roll only high numbers or roll only a 0 or a 1. They allow you to better plan where you travel.

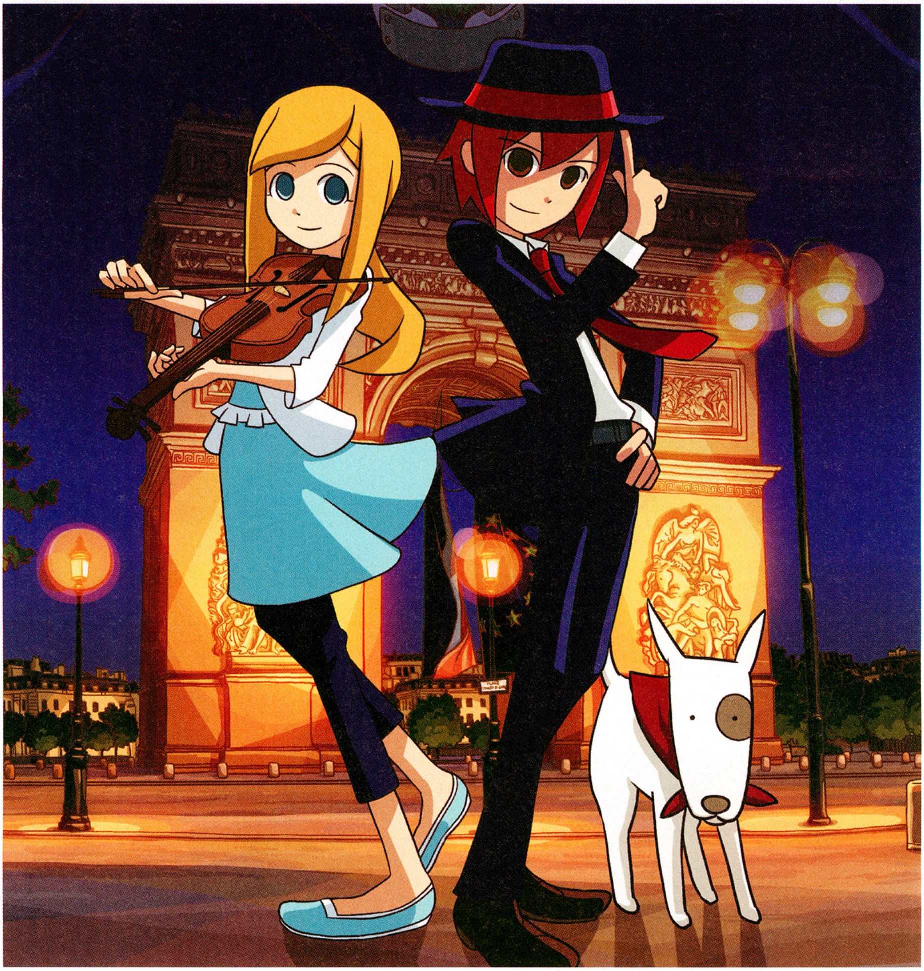
The first stage that we played was Toad Road, which has a fairly basic layout. One of the main attractions is a broken bridge that cannot be jumped unless all players roll a sufficiently high number. Failing to do so drops the car into a Mini Ztar-filled canyon. The second stage, Bob-omb Factory, is littered with conveyer belts that change your course. Each stage also includes an encounter with a miniboss and a final boss. In the Bob-omb Factory's fight against a giant Whomp, for instance, each player stands on a rotating platform while attempting to avoid being flattened by the stone creature.

You can't have a Mario Party title without minigames, and there are dozens of new challenges in which to compete. These range from memory games (quickly count a horde of Goombas as they rush into their homes) to tests of your button-pressing skills (tap the proper buttons to climb a mountain) to more-physical activities (swing the Wii Remote to throw toppings on a pizza). With so much to do in Mario Party 9, you're bound to be playing with your friends for a long time.—**PHIL T.**



STEALING THE SHOW

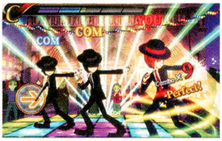
Music, mystery, and mayhem take center stage in **Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure** for Nintendo 3DS.



BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

PUBLISHER: **SEGA** DEVELOPER: **SEGA** RELEASE: **MARCH 2012** N3DS

Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure is a music game like none other. That's true for a few reasons. For one thing, you don't control a typical musical performer; instead, you become Phantom R, the game's titular thief, who's on a mission to find his father. For another, there's far more to the game than just rhythm-based play. Sure, the core action involves pressing buttons, tapping the touch screen, or tilting the Nintendo 3DS hardware to the beat of groovacious tunes, but you'll also find yourself traipsing about Paris, talking to bystanders, visiting historic landmarks, searching for hidden goodies, solving puzzles, and more as you attempt to unravel the game's myriad mysteries. Another aspect that sets Rhythm Thief apart from other music titles is its wide variety of gameplay styles. From pouring beverages via sliding the stylus in specific directions to pushing buttons so you can punch evildoers in the face, the activities in the game are wildly varied. On these pages you'll get a sampling of the diverse gameplay styles you'll encounter, along with an in-depth interview with the producer of this sensationally unique title. If what we've played of Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure so far is an indication of the quality of the final product, we could be singing this game's praises for years to come.



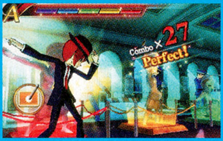
Let's Dance!

AS SEEN IN STAGE R01—SHOWTIME

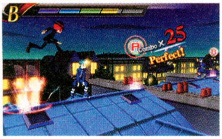
Rhythm Thief begins with a full-fledged dance number on the streets of Paris. The gameplay is fairly traditional: overlapping concentric circles (à la Elite Beat Agents) will help you perfect your timing as you slide your stylus on the touch screen in specific directions—up, down, left, right, or in a circular motion—to perform moves in sync with your fellow dancers. (If you want a real challenge, you can turn off the concentric circles so you have to rely solely on other cues.) This style of gameplay returns later on with trickier timing and additional moves, including in a dance-off with a faux Phantom R.

Striking a Pose

AS SEEN IN STAGE R02—LOOTING THE LOUVRE



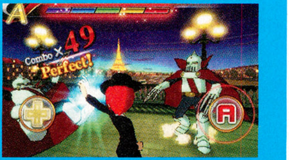
When Phantom R decides to break into the world-famous Louvre museum to steal the Bracelet of Tiamat, he discovers that he can use works of art to sneak past the guards. As you race down the hallways, you'll encounter statues in various poses—standing with one arm up, crouching down, sticking an arm out to the side, or kneeling with both arms out. By tapping the correct color-coded touch-screen button at the right time, you'll assume the appropriate pose right next to a statue, and the guards won't even realize you're there. The gameplay is interspersed with brief, humorous cut-scenes in which Phantom R saunters past the hapless guards.



On the Run

AS SEEN IN STAGE R03—LE GETAWAY

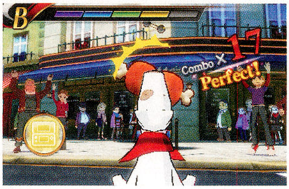
There are several rhythmic platforming challenges in Rhythm Thief; the first occurs after you've stolen the Bracelet of Tiamat and you're making a rooftop escape from the determined Inspector Vergier and his Paris Roller Skate Brigade. The only way to avoid capture is with well-timed presses of the A Button (for jumping over officers or for leaping from platform to platform) and the B Button (for sliding under obstacles and out of harm's way). In later stages the maneuvers you perform are different, but the basic running-and-jumping action remains the same.



Pugilistic Prowess

AS SEEN IN STAGE R04—BATTLE DIABOLIQUE

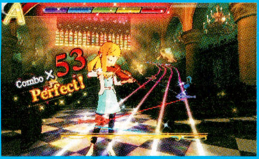
Even when you're as suave as Phantom R, there are times when sophistication alone can't get the job done. For example, when you find yourself surrounded by the Knights Diabolique—the personal soldiers of some guy claiming to be a back-from-the-dead Napoleon Bonaparte—your only option is to resort to fisticuffs. Enemies strike from the left and the right, requiring you to push the Control Pad and the A Button, respectively, to fend off the attackers as they close in. Large enemies occasionally appear, requiring you to rapidly mash both A and the Control Pad to clobber them.



Full Tilt

AS SEEN IN STAGE R05—BONE APPÉTIT

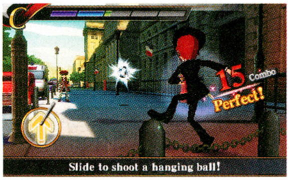
A few stages take advantage of the N3DS system's built-in gyroscopic sensor. In one such stage, you take control of Phantom R's faithful canine companion, Fondue, and tilt the system left and right to catch pieces of meat as they're thrown through the air. You also have to dodge inedible objects and quickly shake the system back and forth to consume massive quantities of meat. A similar mechanic comes into play later, when you must tilt the system to avoid a bodyguard's punches; it's sort of like a motion-controlled Punch-Out!!, except the counterpunches are thrown automatically.



Violin Hero

AS SEEN IN STAGE R07—MOON PRINCESS

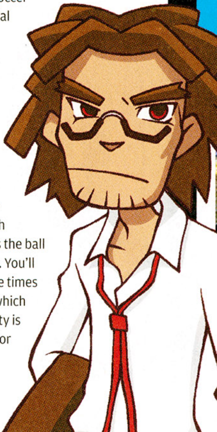
Calmer and more relaxing than most of the activities in Rhythm Thief, the Moon Princess stage puts you in control of Marie, a violinist with a mysterious past who befriends Phantom R. The gameplay is somewhat comparable to that of Guitar Hero or Rock Band; arrows pointing left or right scroll down a track, and you have to move the stylus in the appropriate direction (to simulate moving a bow across a violin's strings) as the arrows cross a threshold at the bottom of the screen.

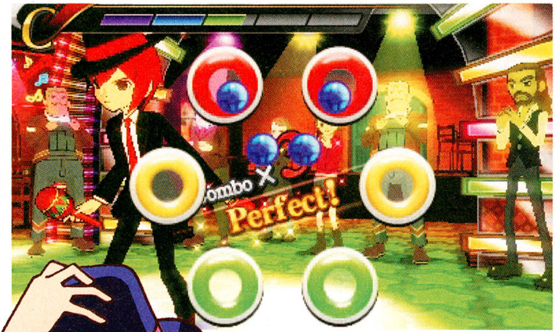


Get Your Kicks

AS SEEN IN STAGE R10—CHARLIE TAKES THE FIELD

During your escapades you'll encounter Charlie, a young boy who is both a soccer enthusiast and an unofficial agent of the law. Charlie considers it his duty to bring Phantom R to justice, and he attempts to do so by knocking him silly with soccer balls. To beat Charlie at his own game, you have to tap the screen to deflect the ball, and make a sliding motion to unleash a powerful kick that sends the ball flying into your adversary. You'll encounter Charlie multiple times during the game, during which you'll learn that his tenacity is a family trait; he's Inspector Vergier's son.

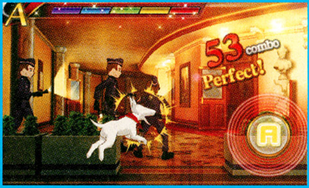




Shake It, Baby

AS SEEN IN STAGE R13—SAMBA CARNIVAL

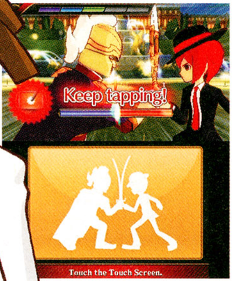
Partway through the game you meet Paul, a dancing fool and self-proclaimed musical savior; he hails from a country in which monkeys and bears supposedly dance in the streets, and he introduces Phantom R to the joys of maracas. The stage is a direct homage to Sega's Samba de Amigo series (last seen on Wii in 2008); you press directions on the Control Pad and use the X, A, and B Buttons to shake your maracas high, medium, or low to the beat of one of Samba de Amigo's most popular songs, "Vamos a Carnaval." You even have to tilt the N3DS system to strike a pose at certain points.



Care for a Bite?

AS SEEN IN STAGE R15—PHANTOM FONDUE

As the game progresses, the capers get more complex. At one point Phantom R disguises himself as a waiter so he can infiltrate a theater and get his hands on the pendant of the world-famous Duchess Elizabeth; meanwhile, you take control of Fondue (dressed as Phantom R) to cause a distraction. As police run past, you'll press the A Button on cue to bite each officer directly on the keister. Some guards are too burly for a regular bite; you'll have to hold down the button for a second to chomp into 'em.



Cutting Edge

AS SEEN IN STAGE R27—THROWDOWN WITH NAPOLEON

Considering that he's the game's main villain, a showdown with Napoleon is inevitable, don't you think? Once you meet the man, you fight him in sword-to-sword combat by rhythmically tapping one of two touch-screen buttons (one to swing high and one to swing low) to deflect Napoleon's attacks. At certain points in the battle you have to rapidly tap the screen to knock Napoleon back. But even if you manage to survive the encounter, rest assured that the adventure is far from over.

Behind the Thief

Shun Nakamura, the producer of Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure, is no stranger to music games. As a member of the renowned Sonic Team, he directed Sega's maraca-shaking hit Samba de Amigo for Dreamcast. He's also familiar with charming, fun, pick-up-and-play action: he directed Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg for GameCube and has contributed to numerous titles in the Sonic the Hedgehog series and the Mario & Sonic sports franchise. We recently had the chance to chat with Nakamura about Rhythm Thief's origins and inspirations, and learn his recipe for rhythm-game success.

NINTENDO POWER **Where did the inspiration for a rhythm game about a thief come from?**

SHUN NAKAMURA We knew that we wanted to integrate storytelling into the rhythm genre, and our first idea was to have a story that centered around Amigo from the game Samba de Amigo. However, some members of the team thought that if we were taking the trouble to make a new type of game, we shouldn't use an existing character, because then it might just be perceived as another sequel. So we began exploring other ideas, and countless proposals were submitted. We decided on a thief for three reasons: the premise lends itself to all sorts of interesting situations, thieves have an air of mystery, and there's inherent drama in the story of why one would become a thief.

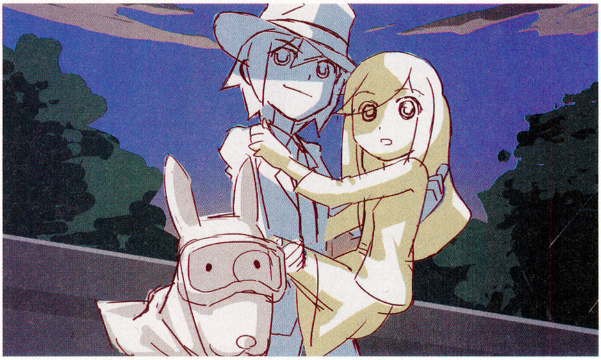
The music in Rhythm Thief has a fairly timeless feel. What made you choose this musical style instead of going with something based specifically on today's musical tastes?

Our goal was to create an all-encompassing music game, so we asked our composers not to draw too much from any one era or focus on any one musical direction. Of course, we did want a sense of consistency to the musical selections, but we focused on using a variety of musical styles—from dance to classical—to keep players perpetually engaged with the music and the gameplay. I'm sure it wasn't easy for the music team to make such disparate styles feel like a unified whole!

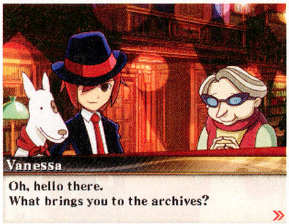
Why did you choose to set the game in Paris?

There was a time when I was really into the novels of Dan Brown, and was particularly interested in stories based on nonfiction elements. That made me realize how a world that has fantasy elements but is grounded in reality can be so much more accessible than a fantasy world created from whole cloth, and how using actual history can add a lot of depth to a story. That's what led us to take advantage of Paris's rich history; everyone is familiar with Paris to some extent, just as everyone is familiar with Napoleon, who is another major element of the story. It was a lot of fun visualizing what players would expect based on their own images of Paris and Napoleon, and coming up with ways to subvert those expectations.

How did you determine what types of activities would translate into fun rhythm games?



[Above] Phantom R gets the girl in this concept art from one of the game's cut-scenes.



Vanessa

Oh, hello there.
What brings you to the archives?

In working on the Sonic, Samba de Amigo, and Mario & Sonic franchises, I've come to believe that rhythm is at the core of gameplay. If people can get into a satisfying groove while playing a game, they'll have fun. If they can't, they won't. I think that no matter what the genre, any game that can get players into a rhythm like that is, in a way, a rhythm game. That's why, with Rhythm Thief, we chose the major storyline situations first, and then added the musical elements afterwards. There was some trial and error involved, but it reaffirmed my belief that as long as the gameplay feels right, anything can become a rhythm game.

When it comes to the rhythm stages, Rhythm Thief features a wide variety of play styles. Which would you say is your favorite and why?

My favorite is the battle with the butler that uses [the N3DS system's internal] gyros. Gyros are tricky to use, since their response time is a bit slow. But working on the Samba de Amigo series taught me the value of physical feedback in rhythm games, and I think I was able to put that experience to good use here. Another favorite is the battle against the knights who attack from both sides of the screen. The gameplay is very simple, but I find it to be really satisfying.

Why did you want to include exploration and investigation elements in addition to the rhythm stages?

That goes back to the theme of the game, which is the integration of story and music. We use animated cut-scenes, but for players to really connect with the story, I thought that we would also need to let them actually enter the world, walk around in it, and gather information for themselves. By adding these exploration elements, we were able to give players the sensation that they really were in Paris, and get them invested in the events that happen there.

What was your philosophy for the puzzles that occur during the exploration segments?

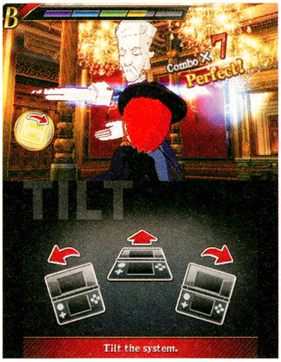
There are a lot of puzzle games in the market right now, and I didn't think that we would be able to surprise or entertain our players by offering more of the same. So we decided that we would only make puzzles based around the two keywords of *sound* and *rhythm*. To be honest, this proved to be more difficult than we bargained for, but now that we've gotten the hang of it, I wonder if maybe we could make a whole game out of these sorts of sound puzzles?

Can you tell me more about the Samba de Amigo homage?
I directed Samba de Amigo about 10 years ago. At the time, I felt restrained by the limitations of the music game genre. But recently, I started thinking that with new rules and new controls, and with the addition of a story, maybe I could create a new type of music game, and decided to challenge the genre once again.

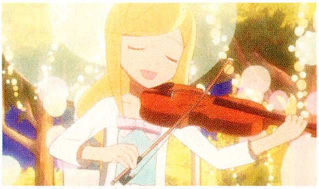
What would you say makes Rhythm Thief "not just another rhythm game?"
There are two things that differentiate Rhythm Thief from other games in the genre. The first is that it incorporates a wide variety of rhythm games with different controls and game mechanics instead of using the same mechanics throughout and only changing the music. As a result, players will constantly be discovering new things to experience and enjoy as they progress through the game.

The other aspect is the integration of a story. Let me put it this way: When you hear a song about heartbreak while you're heartbroken yourself, don't you connect with it much more deeply? Similarly, by giving players a hero to empathize with, all the moments of sorrow and contempt and happiness become that much more powerful. The only other rhythm game I can think of that tried to connect with players on an emotional level was Sega's Space Channel 5. I don't think that any other rhythm game has ever attempted to engage players' emotions on as many levels as Rhythm Thief does.

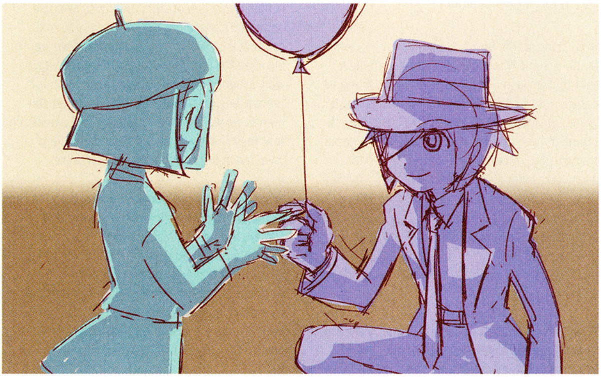
What would your advice be for players who are having a difficult time succeeding at some of the rhythm stages?
This isn't the sort of rhythm game that has a massive stream of button icons flowing down from the top of the screen, so I think that pretty much anyone should be able to enjoy playing it. Even if you do feel that a game is too hard to finish, you can use items to help you through it. The shop sells items that refill your gauge when it hits zero, for example, or make it refill faster. That's one of the ways we balanced the game to make sure that everyone can complete it. If you do use items to finish the game, I hope you'll replay it again without them. After you clear it without using items, you'll feel that your powers of rhythm have grown, and you'll get something different out of it.



Tilt the system.



What are the "full-contact challenges" and what is the benefit of completing them all?
The "full-contact challenge" is a challenge ticket for players who want to play through all of the rhythm games without making any mistakes. You need to purchase it in order to have the game certify a perfect performance. Think of it as a mode for advanced players who enjoy the tension of having to execute a flawless performance under pressure. This is pretty much the last mode in the game, so you don't really get anything for it, but completing the game's other modes does unlock hidden features.



Phantom R takes some time out of his busy thieving schedule to demonstrate his generous side.

The animated 3D cut-scenes are among the most impressive things we've seen on the Nintendo 3DS. Did you collaborate with any production companies or use any special techniques to make them look so good?
All of the credit for the animation sequences goes to the production company who made them. Even though the game has over 30 minutes of animation, tremendous care has gone into each and every animated sequence, and they've turned out beautifully. For example, in the scene where Marie plays the violin, they've combined a 3D model based on someone who is actually playing the violin with 2D animation. And even the 2D animation is composed of hundreds of different layers in order to create the stereoscopic 3D effect. It's this immaculate attention to detail that I think is ultimately responsible for the high quality of the animated sequences.

What do you think separates a good rhythm game from a not-so-good one?
The difference is the exhilarating feeling that good rhythm games provide. Bad rhythm games don't uplift players; they make them feel harried and frantic. It's the integration of music and gameplay that makes rhythm games work. And I do think that there are a lot of good, exhilarating rhythm games out there, so we needed to take it one step further. And I think that step is adding elements that can't be performed with an instrument—that can only be done in a video game. I think with Rhythm Thief, we have a lot of mechanics that aren't based on emulating instruments, and even more significantly than that, the integration with a story helps to create a new type of game experience. It may be a small one, but I think this game is taking a step towards the next evolution of rhythm gaming.

What do you think the real Napoleon Bonaparte would say if he came back to life and played this game?
"I once said, 'There are only two forces in the world: The sword and the spirit.' But now I realize that there's a third force: The force of rhythm."

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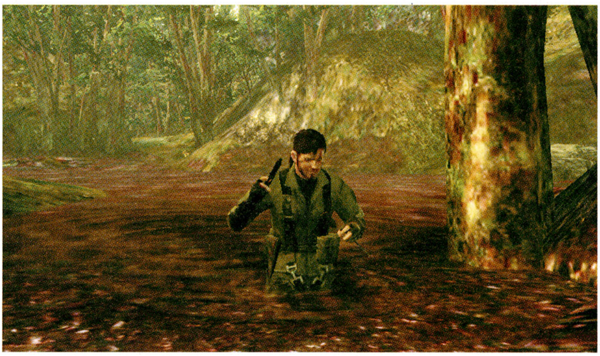
METAL GEAR SOLID: SNAKE EATER 3D

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI | **DEVELOPER:** KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS | **RELEASE:** Q1

If you've been following our coverage of Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D, then you already know it's a 3D-enhanced remake of one of the best entries in the M-rated Metal Gear Solid series. Set during the height of the Cold War, this game tells the story of Naked Snake's one-man mission into the Soviet Union as he attempts to clear America's name. Along the way Snake will journey from swamps to caves to mountaintops, living off the land to survive and using stealth tactics and camouflage to sneak past enemies unscathed. You'll also have many opportunities to pick up a veritable arsenal of weapons (machine guns, rifles, grenades, rocket launchers, etc.) and equipment (including night-vision goggles and a mine detector) so you'll be ready when things get hairy. You'll want to be especially prepared when you go into battle against the Cobra Unit—a team of highly skilled, almost superhuman soldiers who rose to greatness during World War II. Take a look at what you'll be up against when you engage the members of the Cobra Unit in combat. —**CHRIS H.**



THE PAIN

Possessing the ability to control swarms of hornets, The Pain is aptly named. He's able to use his pets not only as offensive weapons, but also to create a defensive shield. He wields a Tommy gun, as well.

THE SORROW

The Sorrow is one of the most bizarre enemies you'll ever encounter. He's a spirit medium with incredible psychic powers, but rumor has it that he's already left the land of the living.

THE FURY

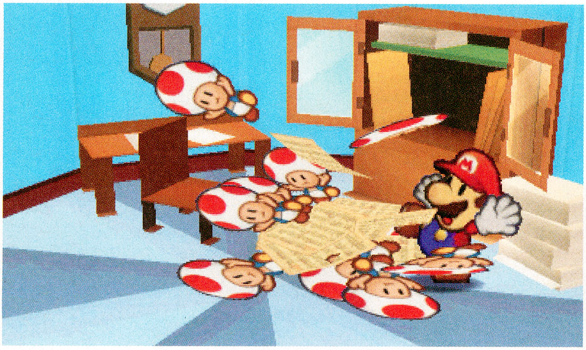
Formerly a Soviet cosmonaut, The Fury despises the world around him. He rockets through the air on a jetpack, hoping to incinerate everything in sight with his deadly flamethrower.

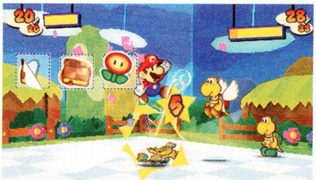
THE FEAR

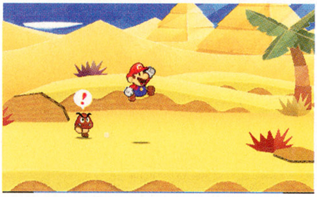
More creature than man, The Fear uses amazing speed and reflexes to climb walls and leap freely through the air. He can become invisible, and he attacks using poisoned crossbow bolts.

THE END

The End may look like a decrepit old geezer, but he springs to life for the thrill of battle. He is an expert sniper, and his battle with Snake is guaranteed to be one of the highlights of the game.







PAPER MARIO*

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO | **DEVELOPER:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS | **RELEASE:** TBA

After having a go at the platforming genre, Paper Mario returns to its RPG roots in this first portable entry in the popular series. As always, the game's battle system places a heavy emphasis on Mario's trademark jumping abilities. Properly timed button taps allow you to score extra damage against enemies during the turn-based battles, and a skilled player can dodge incoming attacks with a quick leap. The two-dimensional characters that define the paper-themed take on the Mario universe look especially impressive thanks to the N3DS system's 3D capabilities, making the game feel like a diorama come to life. And there is a great focus on the fact that the characters are all supposed to be made out of paper. When Mario takes damage, he folds and crinkles from the shock, and new special attacks include a pair of scissors that slices your foes and a massive fan that literally blows away your attackers. **—PHIL T.**

APOCALYPSE NOW!

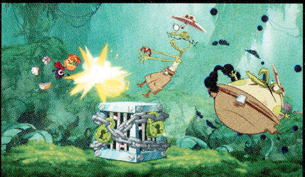
WELCOME TO EARTH (as seen in Contra III: The Alien Wars)

Never tick off a ruthless alien. Sure, Bill and Lance, the stars of the first two Contra titles, had repeatedly defeated the alien overlord Red Falcon, but when the vicious invader returned once again it launches a full-scale attack on Earth. Cities are set ablaze, freeways crumble, dog creatures prowl the streets, and giant turtle monsters run rampant.

RAYMAN ORIGINS

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT | **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT | **RELEASE:** MARCH

The Wii version of Rayman Origins is one of the best releases in recent memory for that console, and now Ubisoft is preparing to bring the game to the N3DS, as well. This portable version of the superb platformer retains the gorgeous, hand-drawn visuals of its console big brother, making it one of the nicest-looking games on the system. Undoubtedly, the 3D effects offered by the N3DS will make the cartoonish graphics all the more appealing. The game starts with Rayman and his lumbering oaf of a sidekick, Globox, as they hang out in the Glade of Dreams. The duo inadvertently starts a war with the denizens of the Land of the Livid Dead due to their loud snoring. The villains have captured some of the Glade's residents, the impish Electoons and the ability-granting Nymphs, and locked them in cages. Rayman and Globox set out to free their friends and save the land. Given the excellent level design and challenge of Rayman Origins for Wii, we're anxious to dive into the N3DS version when it's released. **—PHIL T.**



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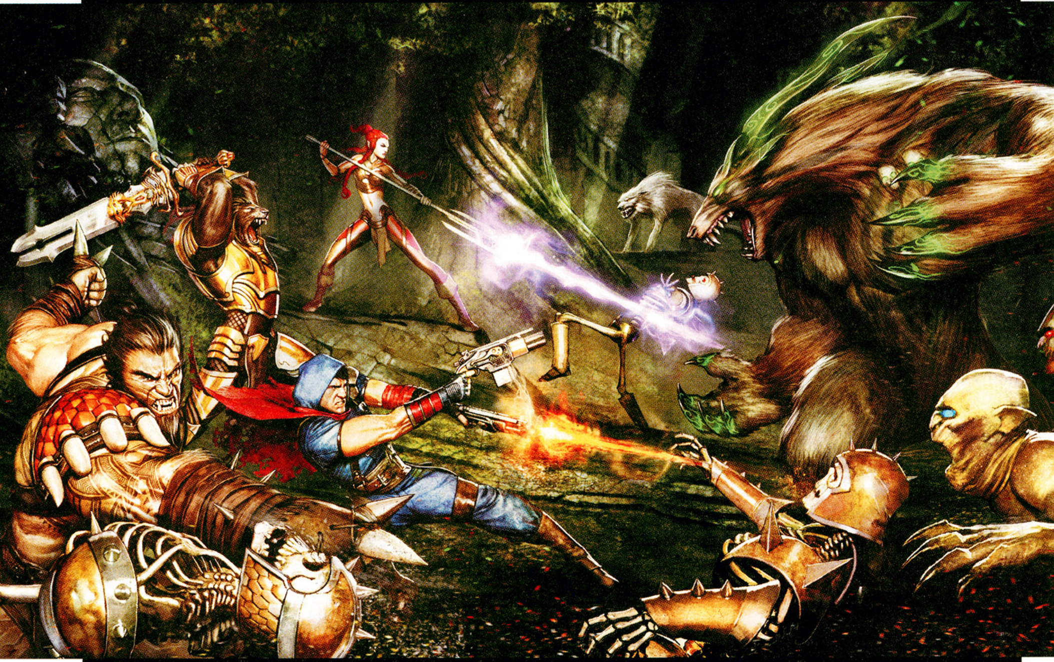


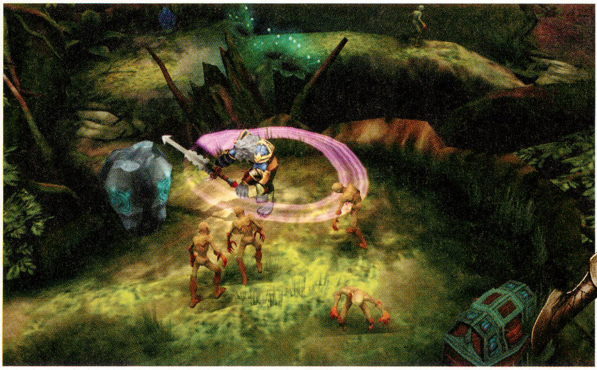
HEROES FOR HIRE

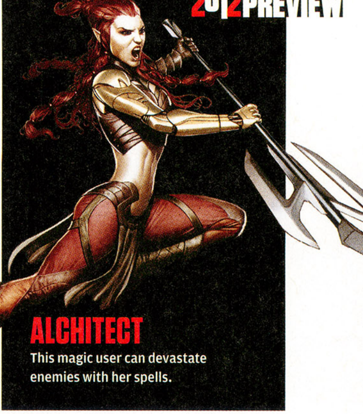
A ragtag band of mercenaries sets out on a quest to save a kingdom in Heroes of Ruin for Nintendo 3DS.

The Nintendo 3DS may have a wide array of games in its library, but the role-playing genre remains underrepresented. There are only two retail RPGs so far—Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked and Tales of the Abyss (see the review on page 88)—and both are 3D-ized versions of already-released games. Fortunately, Square Enix has a brand-new title on the horizon: Heroes of Ruin.

BY **JUSTIN CHENG**

PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX** DEVELOPER: **N-SPACE** RELEASE: **SPRING 2012** **N3DS**

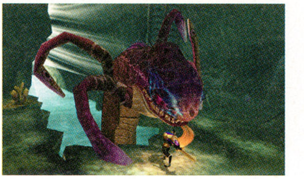




ALCHITECT

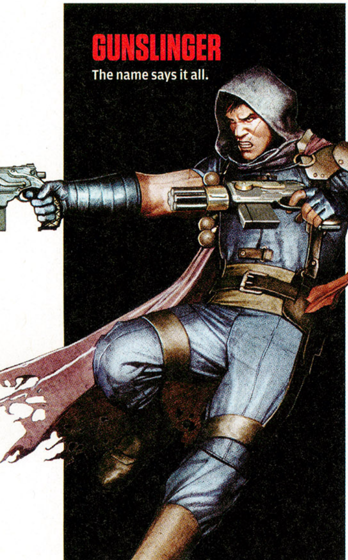
This magic user can devastate enemies with her spells.

This Diablo-like action-RPG has you assuming the mantle of one of four mercenaries—the Vindicator, the Alchitect, the Gunslinger, or the Savage—and trying to find the cure to King Atraxis's sickness. (It's more than just a case of the sniffles; he's afflicted with a kind of corruption.) Of course, you'll need a little direction before you set off on your adventure. As you wander around Atraxis's city, Nexus, you see a variety of icons on the map displayed on the N3DS handheld's touch screen. Treasure-chest icons indicate a shop in which you can purchase weapons, armor, and items; exclamation marks indicate quest-givers. For our hands-on demo, we were tasked with meeting with King Keltas of Salvera, who has some sort of history with Atraxis. Before you can do that, though, you have to speak with a member of the Salveran council named Marliel, who is now a ghost that resides in—appropriately enough—the Haunted Woods.



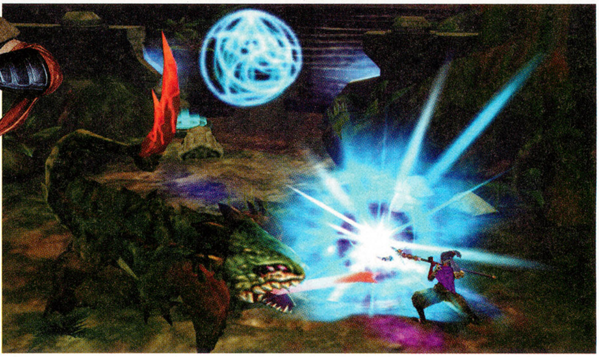
ALCHITECT OF DESTRUCTION

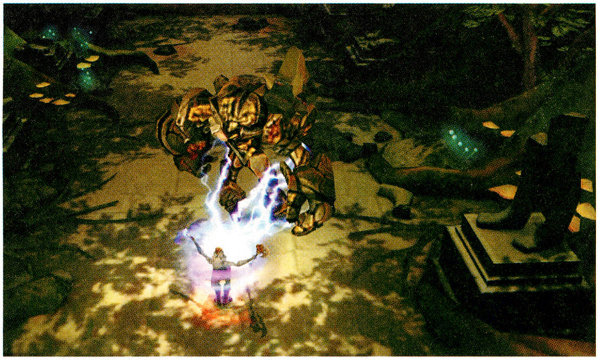
In our first hands-on experience with the game (back in Vol. 269), we tested out the Vindicator, a sword-brandishing cat-man. This time we got to play as the Alchitect, a staff-swinging female mage. Appearances aside, the gameplay differences between the two characters were clear as soon as we encountered our first foes: zombie-esque baddies and enormous wolves. Despite being armed with a staff, the Alchitect is clearly a class that fares better at a distance, using spells such as the homing missile-like Arcane Bolts to keep enemies at bay. We learned this the hard way when we died after trying to defeat adversaries using primarily melee attacks (by tapping B), consuming numerous health potions (by pressing left on the Control Pad) in the process. In order to succeed, we had to make use of dodges (tap R to have the Alchitect do a quick teleport) and blocks (hold R to put up an energy shield), as well as do some customization—assigning spells to X, Y, and A—before diving back into the fray. In addition to the aforementioned Arcane Bolts, we found

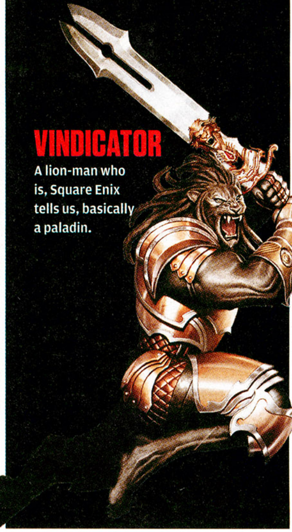


GUNSLINGER

The name says it all.







VINDICATOR

A lion-man who is, Square Enix tells us, basically a paladin.

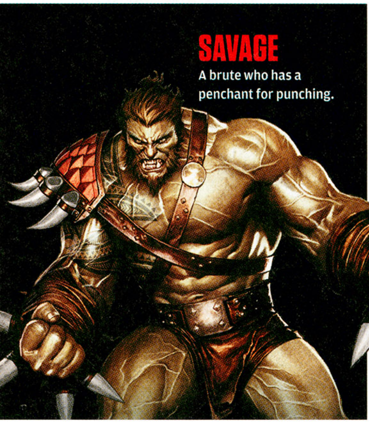
the Gravity Bomb (a grenade-type orb that draws in nearby enemies and holds them in place) and the Death Mist (a, well, *mist* that harms foes that enter it) to be useful. Naturally, using these spells consumes mana, but you can refill your meter with a mana potion by tapping right on the Control Pad.

Defeating baddies can yield a number of results. Oftentimes, enemies drop loot in the form of health/mana potions or armor/weapons. If it's the latter, you can stand over the object to see if the armor/weapon is better or worse than your current equipment—or if it's even suitable for your character class—then decide whether to equip it (by tapping up on the Control Pad), sell it (tap down), or just store it in your inventory (press L, the general interaction button). Dispatching opponents also means earning experience points. Every time you level up, you earn points that are used to unlock new spells in the Alchitect's three skill trees—Warlock, Sorcerer, and Engineer—as well as points that go towards improving your Might (damage you deal), Vigor (health), or Soul (mana).

SHARING IS CARING

Fighting your way through the dynamically generated dungeons by yourself is fun, but considering that Marliel seems less than happy to see you, it behooves you to bring a friend (or three, as the game supports up to four-player co-op via Wi-Fi or local wireless). The ghost is so displeased, in fact, that it sics waves of blazing ghouls on you. Having at least one buddy by your side makes dealing with this horde a bit more manageable than if you were to face the baddies by your lonesome. Once these fiery foes are defeated, Marliel is willing to help you out.

The drop-in/drop-out multiplayer is a big draw for us, but Heroes of Ruin sports a couple of other cool-sounding wireless features, too. (We say *sounding* because these features weren't ready to be tested at the time of our demo.) For instance, you can acquire tons of loot in this game, but obviously not all of it is a good fit for your character. Instead of simply selling it for a quick buck, you can offer it up for trade via StreetPass. Additionally, Square Enix promises to provide daily challenges for a full year. Completing these will give you Valor Points, which can be used to purchase special weapons and armor. It's great to see a publisher pledging so much support for a game before it's even released.



SAVAGE

A brute who has a penchant for punching.

WHAT WE WANT

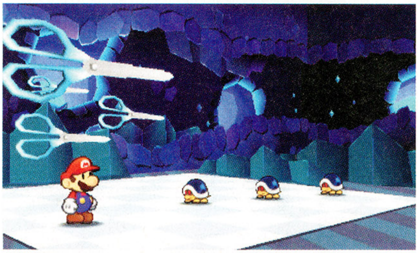
Here are each editor's most anticipated titles of the next 12 months.

CHRIS SLATE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

1. PAPER MARIO* (NINTENDO 3DS)
2. KID ICARUS: UPRISING (NINTENDO 3DS)
3. LUIGI'S MANSION 2 (NINTENDO 3DS)

STEVE THOMASON, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

1. PAPER MARIO* (NINTENDO 3DS)
2. ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES (Wii U)
3. XENOBLADE CHRONICLES (Wii)



JUSTIN CHENG, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

1. PAPER MARIO* (NINTENDO 3DS)
2. KID ICARUS: UPRISING (NINTENDO 3DS)
3. DARKSIDERS II (Wii U)

CHRIS HOFFMAN, SENIOR EDITOR

1. METAL GEAR SOLID: SNAKE EATER 3D (NINTENDO 3DS)
2. XENOBLADE CHRONICLES (Wii)
3. RHYTHM THIEF & THE EMPEROR'S TREASURE (NINTENDO 3DS)

PHIL THEOBALD, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

1. KID ICARUS: UPRISING (NINTENDO 3DS)
2. PAPER MARIO* (NINTENDO 3DS)
3. LEGO CITY STORIES (Wii U)

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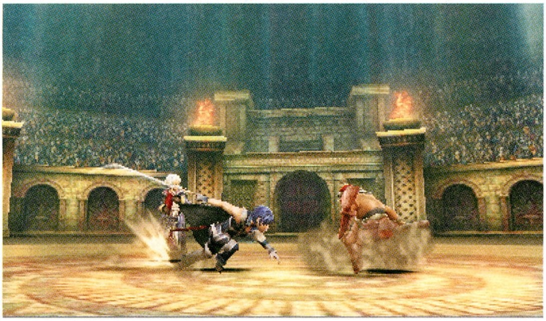
* TENTATIVE TITLE

WHAT WE HOPE TO SEE IN 2012

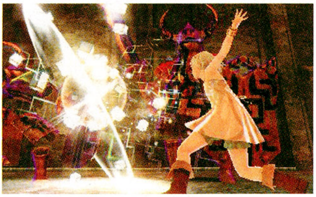
These games haven't been officially announced for a North American release in 2012, but we sure would like them to be.



FIRE EMBLEM*

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO | **DEVELOPER:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS

After a series of DS remakes, the Fire Emblem saga will finally resume with its first new chapter since 2007's Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn. In addition to the glorious 3D graphics, new features include the ability to gang up on foes in two-on-one battles and a board-game-style world map.



BEYOND THE LABYRINTH

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
DEVELOPER: TRI-ACE

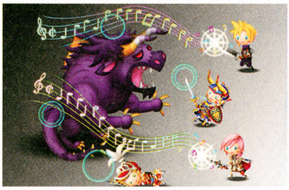
With its charming female lead and unique visual style, tri-Ace's Beyond the Labyrinth looks like a fresh, Alice in Wonderland-inspired take on the Etrian Odyssey-style dungeon-crawler.

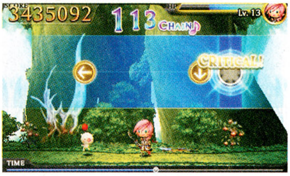
* TENTATIVE TITLE

THEATRHYTHM FINAL FANTASY

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX | **DEVELOPER:** INDIESZERO

Square Enix's intriguingly weird mashup of the RPG genre with Elite Beat Agents-style rhythm gaming deserves a closer look. The game features a three-stage level based on each Final Fantasy game, and the soundtrack alone should make it an indespensible item for hardcore Final Fantasy fans.





BRAVELY DEFAULT: FLYING FAIRY

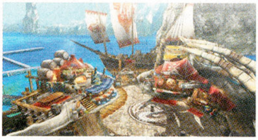
PLATFORM: NINTENDO 3DS | **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX | **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE ENIX

A spiritual sequel to the excellent Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light, Bravely Default features traditional RPG gameplay with gorgeous 3D environments and inspired augmented-reality storytelling. North American RPG fans need this game—but Japan can keep the ridiculous title.

APOCALYPSE NOW!

ANGELS VS. DEMONS (as seen in Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor)

How do you know if an epic battle between angels and demons is brewing that will determine the fate of humanity? Just look for a creepy red portal in the sky. Your newfound ability to control monsters might also be a tip-off. And don't think you're safe just because it starts in Tokyo—after that city, the rest of the world is next!



MONSTER HUNTER 3G

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **CAPCOM** | **DEVELOPER:** **CAPCOM**

Historically, American audiences haven't responded to Monster Hunter the way their Japanese counterparts have, but Monster Hunter Tri for Wii seems to have won over a sizable fanbase. Hopefully Capcom will be willing to feed its new fans' addictions by localizing this enhanced and expanded N3DS version of the game.

TIME TRAVELERS

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **LEVEL-5** | **DEVELOPER:** **LEVEL-5**

This story-driven adventure features quick time event-style interactive sequences and frequent branching points that affect the story. It's not the sort of game that comes out in the West often (and its fully voiced script wouldn't be cheap to localize), but director Jiro Ishii has publicly expressed interest in an international release.

PROFESSOR LAYTON VS. ACE ATTORNEY

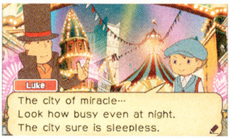
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **LEVEL-5/CAPCOM** | **DEVELOPER:** **LEVEL-5**

Some crossovers sound so ridiculous that they loop right back to sounding awesome. Case in point: Professor Layton and Phoenix Wright traveling to a parallel, medieval-themed universe full of puzzles to ponder and witch trials to litigate. We're eager to find out if these two great tastes taste great together.

PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE MASK OF MIRACLE

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **DEVELOPER:** **LEVEL-5** | **PUBLISHER:** **LEVEL-5**

While Professor Layton's first N3DS adventure sticks close to the series's tried-and-true formula, its polygonally modeled characters put the platform's added power and 3D display to good use. The game was translated and playable at E3 2010, but official word of a US release has been slow to follow.



Luke

The city of miracle···
Look how busy even at night.
The city sure is sleepless.

ルナ

シグマさん、今さらこんなことを言うのもなんですが……

GOOD PEOPLE DIE

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **CHUNSOFT** | **DEVELOPER:** **CHUNSOFT**

999: Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors proved to be a cult hit on the DS, and in Japan the Nintendo 3DS will be getting the game's hotly anticipated sequel. Featuring a mix of new and returning characters, the new title explores concepts of cooperation and betrayal. Get cracking on the localization, Aksys—we won't take no for an answer!

DRAGON QUEST HEROES: ROCKET SLIME 3

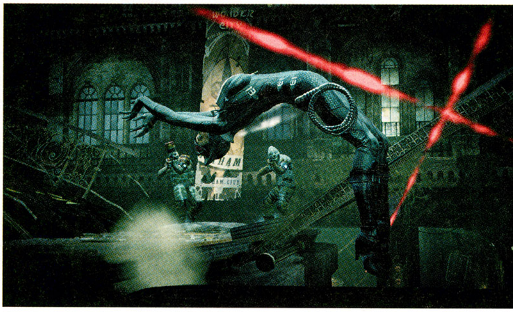
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS** | **PUBLISHER:** **SQUARE ENIX** | **DEVELOPER:** **TOSE**

Square Enix had a cult hit—if not a commercial one—with the DS release of Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime. This N3DS sequel offers the same mix of Zelda-style action-RPG sequences and strategic ship-vs.-ship battles, but replaces the hand-drawn art with a polygonal 3D world.

NINTENDO'S NEXT GENERATION

The launch of Wii U is poised to be gaming's biggest event of 2012. Here's a rundown of the impressive lineup slated for the console thus far.

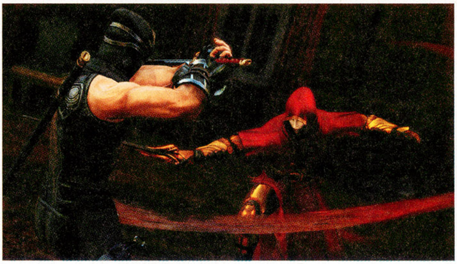
MUCH ABOUT THE Wii U CONSOLE remains shrouded in secrecy (expect Nintendo to pull back the curtain at June's Electronic Entertainment Expo), but we're already salivating over its high-definition visuals and innovative controller. Perhaps more importantly, third parties are lining up to support the system in a way they never quite did for Wii. On the following pages, we highlight the most significant offerings that have been announced to date. Please note that screenshots may not represent the final Wii U versions of the games.



BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE** | **DEVELOPER:** **ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS**

Batman is back in his darkest and most thrilling adventure to date. Arkham City sees the Caped Crusader fighting iconic villains and common thugs alike in an open-world section of Gotham City cordoned off to deal with the burgeoning criminal element. Impressively fluid combat lets the Dark Knight create brutal combos amidst a pack of foes, while his trademark gadgets help him get around and solve tricky puzzles during the lengthy campaign. And in a surprise twist, Catwoman even gets some screen time as a playable character! Batman: Arkham City's recent release on other platforms had fans and critics alike calling it the best superhero game to date, and the Wii U version is bound to be one of the top picks on the system as soon as it ships. —**ANDREW H.**



NINJA GAIDEN 3: RAZOR'S EDGE

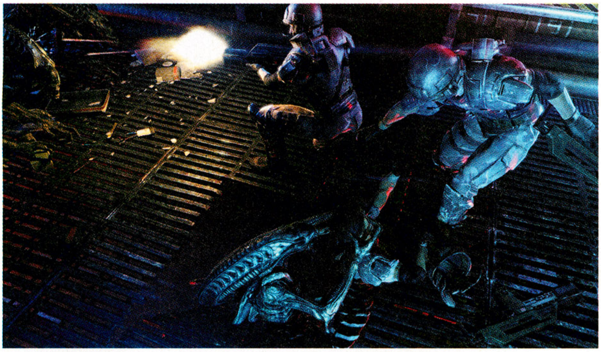
PUBLISHER: TECMO KOEI | **DEVELOPER:** TEAM NINJA

Change is in the air for the traditionally M-rated Ninja Gaiden series now that former Team Ninja studio director Tomonobu Itagaki is no longer at the helm, but exactly how much change we're in for and whether that's a good thing remains to be seen. What is clear is that this Wii U launch title won't skimp on the fast-paced baddie-slicing or the ridiculous gore. While you can no longer sever the limbs of your foes like you're pruning branches off of overgrown bushes—a staple of the previous game—Ninja Gaiden 3 keeps its mature focus with ample over-the-top violence and fountains of spraying blood. Ryu remains as agile as ever, too, and his moves have been updated to let him scale sheer walls with dragon claws, slide under tight spots to escape danger, sneak up on enemies for stealth kills, and dodge out of harm's way. That's fortunate, since this crazy ninja romp throws him into the fray against terrorists packing some serious high-tech weaponry. Let the bloodletting commence. **—NATHAN M.**

APOCALYPSE NOW!

THE WALKING DEAD (as seen in Zombie Nation)

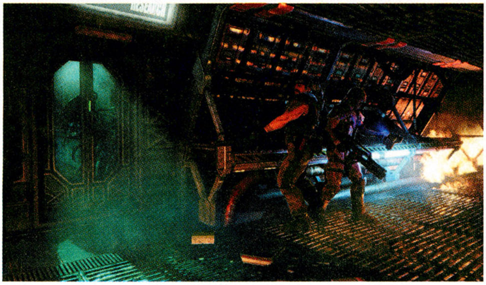
You know the apocalypse has gotten bad when a massive, disembodied samurai head that launches eyeballs and spits caustic goo is the good guy. In fact, Namakubi (the aforementioned samurai) is our only hope against the zombies that have taken over the world after a meteor crashes in the Nevada desert and covers our planet in magnetic rays.

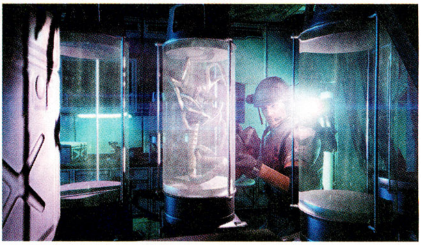


ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

PUBLISHER: SEGA | DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE

Designed as a true sequel to the landmark 1986 film *Aliens*, Colonial Marines shakes up typical first-person-shooter conventions for mature audiences by ushering in a very different kind of enemy. As shown in early footage, the slimy, speedy xenomorphs drop from the ceiling, climb up the walls, and skitter across the floor as they try to tackle their prey. Those aliens paired with the eerie ambiance established by the dynamic lighting and slick sound design result in one of the most terrifying and atmospheric shooters we've seen to date. Add in co-op play and familiar sights and sounds from the legendary series—along with the genre expertise of developer Gearbox—and this Aliens redux looks to serve up some serious shock and awe on Wii U. **—ANDREW H.**

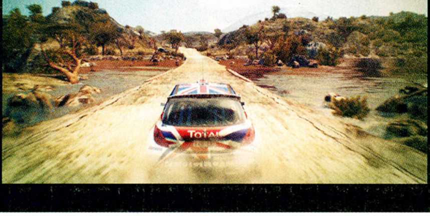


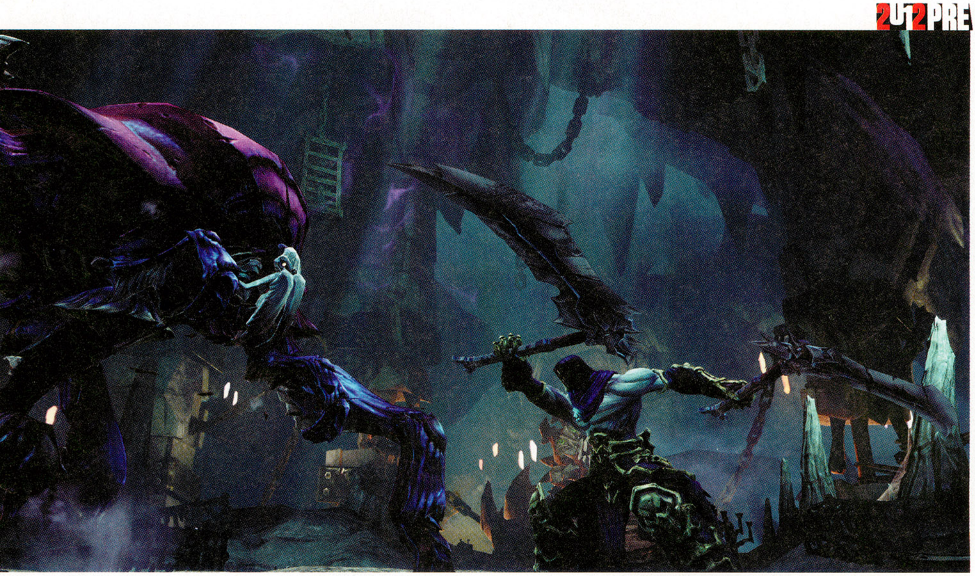


DIRT 3

PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS | DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

DiRT 3 takes rally racing to thrilling new heights, with wickedly slick visuals and presentation throughout, all layered atop rock-solid driving physics across a mix of vehicle types. Included in the package are rally cars, buggies, and even F1-style speedsters, with an abundance of muddy trails and urban tarmacs to tear up along the way. Beyond multiple racing styles, the game includes Gymkhana events, which let you pull off vehicle-based tricks in specially designed lots. That offers a fun twist on the standard driving approach, but it's the thrilling races—especially when zipping around turns using the lifelike in-car view—that could make DiRT 3 a can't-miss experience. **—ANDREW H.**





DARKSIDERS II

PUBLISHER: THQ | **DEVELOPER:** VIGIL GAMES

Vigil Games will be among the first developers to show us what the Wii U is capable of when it unleashes Darksiders II, the sequel to its 2010 action-adventure hit. This time, it's up to the horseman Death to uncover proof—through battles, exploration, and puzzle-solving—that his brother War, hero of the first game, is not to blame for the early arrival of Doomsday. Promising an M-rated adventure that's bigger and a new hero that's more lethal, the game is shaping up to be a worthy successor to the original's take on the apocalypse. We talked with producer Ryan Stefanelli to find out the latest on Death's big adventure. —RANDY N.

NINTENDO POWER What are the biggest changes and additions you're making to Darksiders II when compared to the original Darksiders?

RYAN STEFANELLI We've made a lot of changes and additions to Darksiders II. The biggest would have to be that you play as Death rather than War, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. We've also created a bigger, more fantastic world; included features like experience levels and skill sets; added in loads of weapons and armor to hunt for. Those are the big ones, but the list goes on and on and on....

Looking back at the original game, what do you most wish you'd done differently, and how are you addressing it in the sequel?

Hard to say if there's much we would've done differently. We did decide we needed to get players into the core of the game—adventuring—sooner rather than later. Darksiders started with a lot of combat and linearity, which made it feel like an action game exclusively. Darksiders II will start with a different tone, and really sell the dream of adventuring early on.

How is playing as Death fundamentally different from playing as War?

War was definitely a soldier of justice—the kind of guy that will smash first and ask questions later in the name of duty. Death has more attitude than that, and will gladly circumvent law and order to set things straight. This is true for combat, as well. Where War was a towering hulk of destruction, Death is a nimble and agile fighter. Unlike War, Death doesn't block—he's either on the offensive, or dodging out of harm's way to get in another strike. He's the embodiment of energy in combat, in contrast to War, who was the embodiment of momentum. Both are awesome, but people are going to love how Death plays.

Is Darksiders II using a new or improved game/3D engine? If so, how is it different?

Darksiders II builds on the engine we created in-house for [the original Darksiders]. We certainly added a lot of new features, but the core remains the same. Describing the differences would mean a lot of technical jargon, but suffice it to say Darksiders II will improve on the existing engine in quite a few ways.

What characters/voice cast can we expect to see returning?

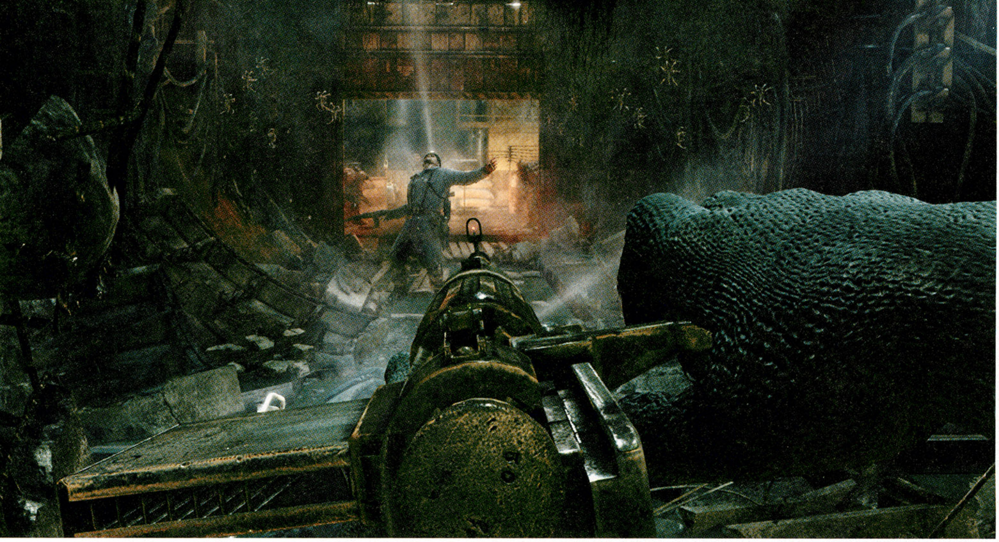
If I told you that, it might ruin some surprises in the game's story. One thing we can say: Death is voiced by the fantastic actor Michael Wincott (*The Crow*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*). He's killer.

Are you planning any content exclusive to the Wii U version?

My lips are sealed.

Do you have any kind of motto for development of Darksiders II?

Make it great. Sounds cliché, but it's the truth!



METRO: LAST LIGHT

PUBLISHER: THQ | **DEVELOPER:** 4A GAMES

The Mature-rated Xbox 360 title Metro 2033 may have had its flaws, but the survival horror-tinged first-person shooter really hit the sweet spot of eerie style and creep factor. Ukrainian studio 4A Games aims to tighten the loose screws and up the supernatural chills for this intense-looking sequel. Last Light sees protagonist Artyom's return to the dark subway tunnels beneath a post-apocalyptic Moscow, where mutated beasts, neo-Nazi factions, and a brewing civil war threaten to destroy the few remaining pockets of society that have holed up below ground. Limited resources require scavenging, and you must use stealth tactics to conserve ammo for your arsenal of classic guns and cool steampunk-inspired weapons between full-on gunfights. You'll sneak up on foes for silent kills and shoot out light bulbs to hide in the shadows. Fighting your way across barreling trains and infiltrating packed enemy compounds in this subterranean realm will offer plenty of action too. —**NATHAN M.**

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON ONLINE

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT | **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT

Offering straightforward, action-packed third-person-shooter gameplay, the multiplayer-only Ghost Recon Online is shaping up to be an exciting addition to the Wii U console's early game lineup. While specific details about the console's online infrastructure are still forthcoming, we do know that the first Tom Clancy title for Nintendo's next system will be a streamlined affair that revolves around three core warrior classes—Assault, Recon, and Specialist. Each class has a unique loadout and special ability, and the emphasis will be on using teamwork to maximize effectiveness in battle. A persistent experience and ranking system will afford a means to customize your soldier's look and expand his firepower. Other additions, such as a handy tactical map that can be used to highlight rally points for comrades and a recon drone for sniffing out hidden enemy positions, make us psyched to see how this one will turn out. —**NATHAN M.**

APOCALYPSE NOW!

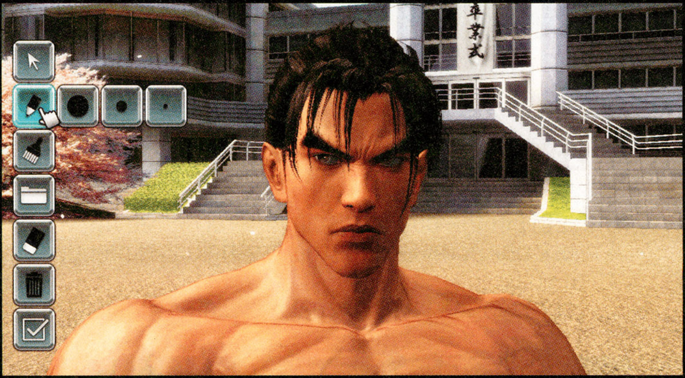
MADMAN'S FURY (as seen in Final Fantasy VI Advance)

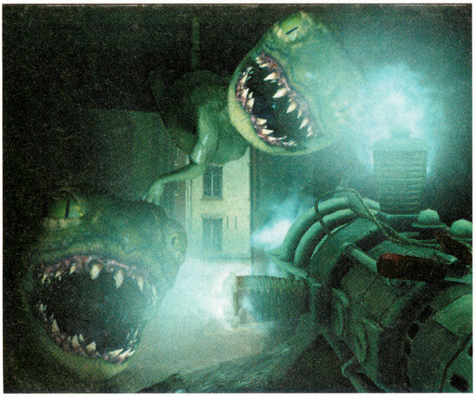
Sometimes it just takes one jerk to mess everything up. Like in Final Fantasy VI Advance, when Kefka meddles with some magic statues—suddenly the world starts falling apart and he has all the power. The next thing you know, the continents have been rearranged, monsters soar through the sky, and everything is kinda purple.

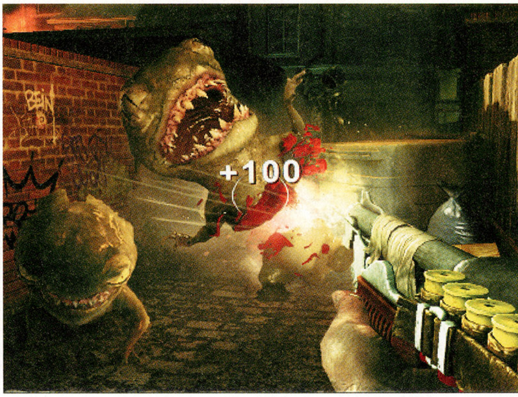
TEKKEN*

PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI | **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO BANDAI

It's been a while since Tekken has appeared on a Nintendo platform, and Namco Bandai is making up for lost time—we're getting not only Tekken 3D Prime Edition for the Nintendo 3DS handheld, but also a Wii U iteration of The King of Iron Fist Tournament. Unfortunately, not many specifics are known about this high-definition fighter (not even its final title), but it seems safe to assume that Tekken standbys such as Jin Kazama and Heihachi Mishima will be included. —JUSTIN C.







KILLER FREAKS FROM OUTER SPACE

PUBLISHER: UBISOFT | **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTPELIER

The folks that brought us the original Rayman Raving Rabbids and Rabbids Go Home try their hand at something a bit different with Killer Freaks from Outer Space. OK, a lot different. This Wii U exclusive is aimed squarely at mature audiences; it's an ultraviolent first-person shooter that tasks players with traveling the globe to stave off bloodthirsty hordes of alien invaders. In addition to the single-player campaign, the game will offer a unique multiplayer mode in which one person strategically deploys the homicidal ETs while the other tries to survive. The game's aesthetic seems to take inspiration from classic B sci-fi flicks, though one can't help but notice that some of the aliens bear a striking resemblance to a certain group of maniacal bunnies (albeit much slimier and with sharper teeth). —STEVE T.

---

* TENTATIVE TITLE

2011 NINTENDO POWER AWARDS NOMINEES

With 2011 in the books, it's time to recognize the year's best games! Peruse our nominees for the prestigious Nintendo Power Awards, then go to **www.nintendopower.com/npawards** and vote for your favorites! We'll reveal the winners in next month's issue.

🟩 NINTENDO 3DS
🟦 Wii
🟥 NINTENDO DS

GAME OF THE YEAR: NINTENDO 3DS

A	Dead or Alive Dimensions
B	The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
C	Mario Kart 7
D	Sonic Generations
E	Super Mario 3D Land
F	Super Street Fighter IV: 3D Edition

GAME OF THE YEAR: Wii

A	Bit.Trip Complete
B	Kirby's Return to Dream Land
C	The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
D	Rayman Origins
E	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters

GAME OF THE YEAR: NINTENDO DS

A	Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective
B	Kirby Mass Attack
C	Okamiden
D	Pokémon Black and Pokémon White Versions
E	Professor Layton and the Last Specter
F	Solatorobo: Red the Hunter

GAME OF THE YEAR: DOWNLOADABLE

A	🟥	Antipole
B	🟦	Bit.Trip Flux
C	🟩	Freakyforms: Your Creations, Alive!
D	🟥	The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Anniversary Edition
E	🟥	Mighty Milky Way
F	🟦	MotoHeroz

BEST NINTENDO 3DS GRAPHICS

- **A** Dead or Alive Dimensions
- **B** The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
- **C** Nano Assault
- **D** Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D
- **E** Star Fox 64 3D
- **F** Super Mario 3D Land

BEST Wii GRAPHICS

- **A** Conduit 2
- **B** Kirby's Return to Dream Land
- **C** The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
- **D** Rayman Origins

BEST ADVENTURE GAME

- **A** Cave Story 3D
- **B** Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective
- **C** The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
- **D** The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
- **E** Okamiden
- **F** Solatorobo: Red the Hunter

BEST ROLE-PLAYING/STRATEGY GAME

- **A** Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation
- **B** Pokémon Black and Pokémon White Versions
- **C** Radiant Historia
- **D** Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked
- **E** Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars

BEST SPORTS GAME

- **A** FIFA Soccer 12
- **B** Mario Sports Mix
- **C** Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters
- **D** Virtua Tennis 4

BEST NINTENDO DS GRAPHICS

- **A** Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation
- **B** Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective
- **C** Kingdom Hearts Re:coded
- **D** Monster Tale
- **E** Radiant Historia
- **F** Solatorobo: Red the Hunter

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

- **A** Bit.Trip Complete
- **B** The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
- **C** Radiant Historia
- **D** Rayman Origins
- **E** Sonic Generations
- **F** Super Mario 3D Land

BEST ACTION GAME

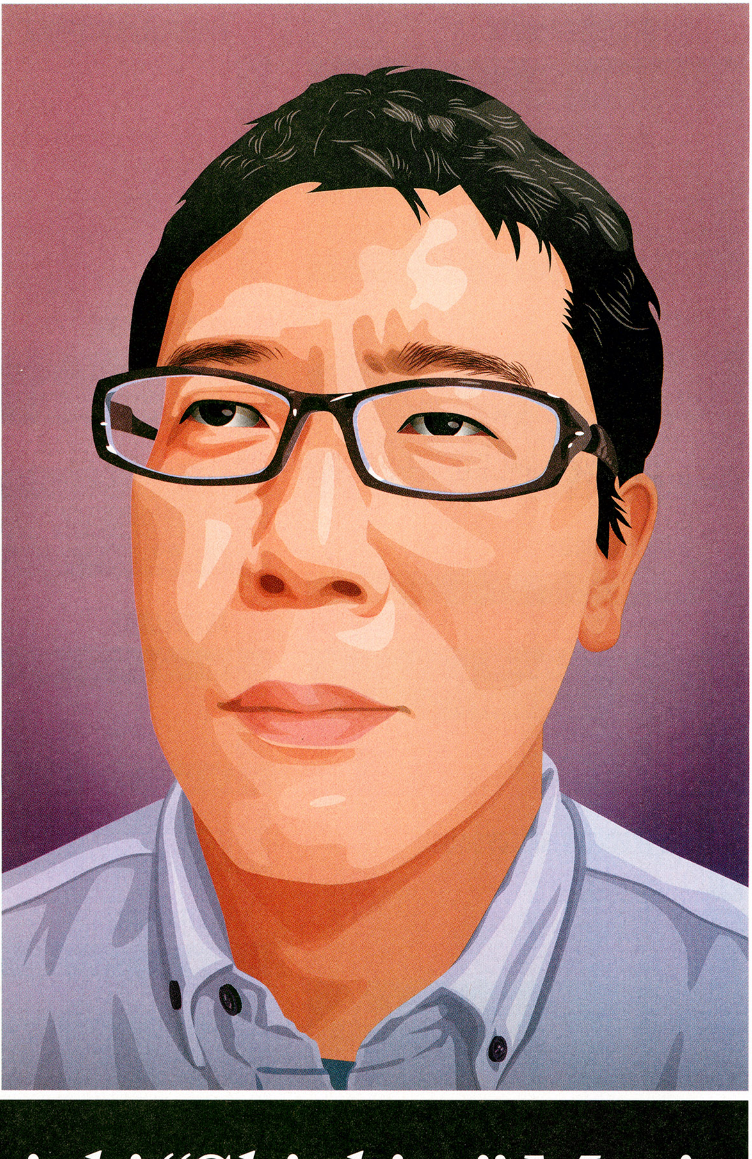
- **A** Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy
- **B** Aliens: Infestation
- **C** Kirby Mass Attack
- **D** Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D
- **E** Shinobi
- **F** Star Fox 64 3D

BEST PLATFORMER

- **A** de Blob 2
- **B** Giana Sisters DS
- **C** Kirby's Return to Dream Land
- **D** Rayman Origins
- **E** Sonic Generations
- **F** Super Mario 3D Land

For the complete list of nominees, visit our website at **www.nintendopower.com/npawards**

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
December 14, 1962

BIRTHPLACE
Okayama prefecture, Japan

POSITION
Illustrator, Capcom

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating artwork for countless Capcom and SNK games

FAVORITE FOOD
Sushi

CURRENT PROJECTS
Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

Toshiaki "Shinkiro" Mori

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

If you've played video games in the last 20 years, you've almost undoubtedly encountered the works of the man known as Shinkiro. Boasting a distinctive, immediately recognizable artistic style that blends Eastern and Western conventions, Shinkiro has been responsible for the packaging, promotional illustrations, and in-game artwork for dozens if not hundreds of titles. Originally synonymous with SNK during the heyday of the NeoGeo console, Shinkiro now lends his talents to popular Capcom properties such as Street Fighter and Resident Evil. No matter what he's illustrating, however, Shinkiro is always a master of his craft.

NINTENDO POWER **How did you originally become interested in art and illustration?**
SHINKIRO I believe it was during my teens when I came across a magazine—*Starlog Japanese Edition*. It introduced me to sci-fi movies and comic-book art.

And how did you get into the video game business? Had you wanted to work in the games business for a long time, or was it more like the games business found you?
I joined a company in my neighborhood that was recruiting illustrators. That company just so happened to be SNK. I didn't originally plan on working in the game industry.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I wanted to be either a manga artist or an illustrator. Before joining the game industry I worked as a manga artist for a while, so my dreams did come true in the end.

Did you write manga as well?
I've written and illustrated short manga stories before, but the serialized manga I worked on was written by an actual storywriter. It was a sports-themed manga, and the only one I worked on to be collected into a separate volume.

We've heard that between graduating from design school and going to work for SNK, you were a cook (as well as a freelance illustrator). Where did you work as a cook, and what kind of cooking did you do?
I worked as a freelance illustrator during the daytime, and at night I worked at a restaurant. It was a systemized family restaurant, so the food preparation was quite simple. I cooked things like hamburgers and steaks, and even made parfaits for dessert.

What was it like working at SNK during the early days of the NeoGeo, and what were your duties in the beginning on games such as Alpha Mission II?
Initially, my main duties were package illustration. In the beginning, I was the only illustrator employed by SNK, so I had to draw illustrations for various genres of games. That was tough.

What is the difference in illustrating games of different genres?
When it comes to other genres compared to fighting games, there are fewer characters, which makes it easier on me. Fighting games always have very large character rosters, and often have additional characters [as the series continues], which just adds up to a lot of work. There are also times when I am in charge of retouching the CG art for certain games—for example, in the Resident Evil and Dead Rising series. I process and retouch the 3D CG images provided using Adobe Photoshop. If the retouched CG image looks good, I feel like it was because I did a good job. But if the result comes out as just OK, I tend to think the original CG image wasn't very good to begin with.

You've worked on a lot of recognizable games, but at what part of the process do you usually become involved? Are you involved in the character-conception process, or do you provide illustrations after most of the designs are already determined?
For the most part, I provide illustrations after the character designs have already been decided.

How do you set about creating a game illustration? Do you see a lot of the game and go with what most catches your eye, or are you usually asked to include very specific elements?
It varies from case to case. There are times when I have a great amount of freedom to illustrate as I see fit, and other times I have to work with set concepts that are given to me beforehand. However, I am always drawing for the game as it is being developed, so there are times when sudden character changes force me to modify my pictures as I go along.

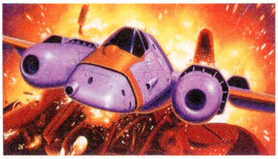
What kind of artistic media do you use for your art?
From the initial rough sketches, everything is done completely digitally.

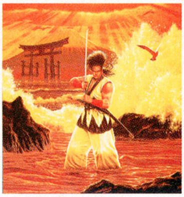
Of which of your illustrations are you most proud? (We've always been fans of the art of Geese Howard and Billy Kane in their suits from Real Bout Fatal Fury.)
I also like the art I did for SNK during my time there, but as for my Capcom years, I am very proud of the poster art I did for the arcade version of Tatsunoko vs. Capcom. I grew up enjoying the various Tatsunoko characters, so being able to draw them at work was something really enjoyable for me.

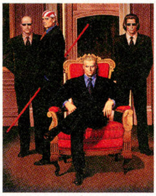
Your artistic style is more realistic and restrained than most video game art we see out of Japan. Did you deliberately want to do something different, or did that come

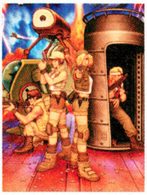
GAMEOGRAPHY

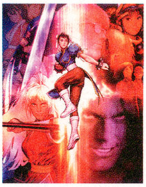
Though he's worked on a wide variety of titles, Shinkiro is most closely associated with fighting games. His unique approach can be seen in series such as Fatal Fury, Art of Fighting, The King of Fighters, and numerous Capcom crossover fighting games.


ALPHA MISSION II
1991, NEOGEO
PACKAGE ILLUSTRATOR

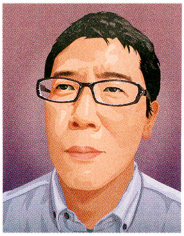

SAMURAI SHODOWN
1993, NEOGEO
ILLUSTRATOR


REAL BOUT FATAL FURY
1995, NEOGEO
ILLUSTRATOR


METAL SLUG 3
2000, NEOGEO
ILLUSTRATOR


CAPCOM VS. SNK 2: MARK OF THE MILLENNIUM 2001
2001, PLAYSTATION 2
ILLUSTRATOR

Power Profiles



naturally?
Starlog magazine introduced me to many foreign artists' styles, so I believe that naturally influenced me.

How would you say your approach to art is different from that of your contemporaries?
It's hard to say, but people have said that I am quite fast when it comes to illustrating art pieces. However, this has declined with my old age. I get tired more quickly these days!

Since Capcom and SNK were longtime rivals, was it at all weird to make the transition to Capcom when that time came? Did you have to change your approach at all when you went to Capcom?
Other than the longer work hours, there wasn't anything weird about making the transition. At first my approach didn't change, but I believe it did gradually change over time.

You've worked with properties such as Marvel and Tatsunoko. What's your philosophy for adapting those characters to your style, and which characters posed challenges for you?
It's impossible to perfectly adapt the characters, so I have to apply my own filter when illustrating them. Then I just pray that fans don't get upset when they see the final product.

Marvel has strict guidelines when it comes to female characters, so I wasn't able to freely draw Morrigan or Felicia in the poses that I would have liked to for Marvel vs. Capcom 3.

Are there any other well-known properties you'd like to work with that you haven't had a chance to be involved with yet?
I know it's tough, but...DC Comics.

Do you usually play the games you create illustrations for? If so, which are your favorites?
I don't really play that many games, but I do like the Resident Evil series (especially Resident Evil 4).

What are some of the most challenging illustrations you've created?
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom was a challenging series. Some characters originally look pretty realistic, while others have a more cartoony look to them, so it was hard to find a balance between the vast variety in styles.

Also, Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins was really tough to work on. The producer of the game really loved the Ghosts 'n Goblins series, so he looked very closely at all the little details in my illustrations. As a result, I had to redo a lot of them over and over, and it was tough to get them approved. The work on this game definitely tested me, both mentally and physically.

> *"I enjoy creating art for characters that the rest of the world has yet to know will appear in the games."*

Some game-industry artists made the transition to working on the design and production of games. Have you ever thought of getting more involved in game design, or perhaps even making your own game?
I've never considered this.

We're aware that Shinkiro is spelled with the characters for "forest," "air" or "spirit," and "watchtower." But how did you choose your pen name?
I was thinking of a few different pen names, and just chose the one I thought seemed best.

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?
When I first joined the game industry, arcades were the main presence in the industry. Consoles eventually overtook arcades in terms of quality and popularity, and now Internet and mobile games have come on strong. Maybe one day consoles will be overtaken by tablet computers; it's hard to say.

What aspect of creating video game art do you enjoy the most?
I enjoy creating art for characters that the rest of the world has yet to know will appear in the games.

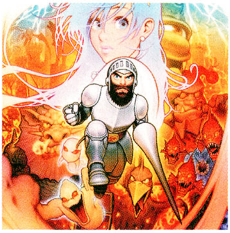
When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating an illustration, what's your process for working through it?
The majority of the problems I encounter are scheduling-related, so I leave those to my bosses to handle for the most part.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I enjoyed the movie *Kick-Ass*. I hope they'll make a sequel someday.

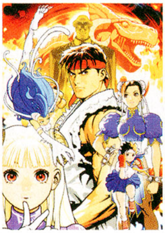
What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Renting a ton of DVDs from the rental shop, and then grudgingly returning them half-unwatched on the due date.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
I'd get in trouble with the law, so I'd rather not say.

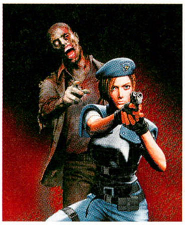
GAMEOGRAPHY



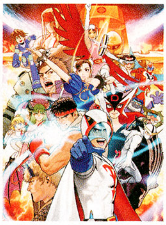
SUPER GHOULS 'N GHOSTS
2002, GAME BOY ADVANCE
ILLUSTRATOR



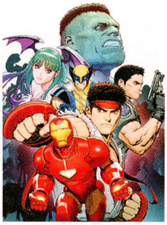
CAPCOM FIGHTING EVOLUTION
2004, PLAYSTATION 2
ILLUSTRATOR



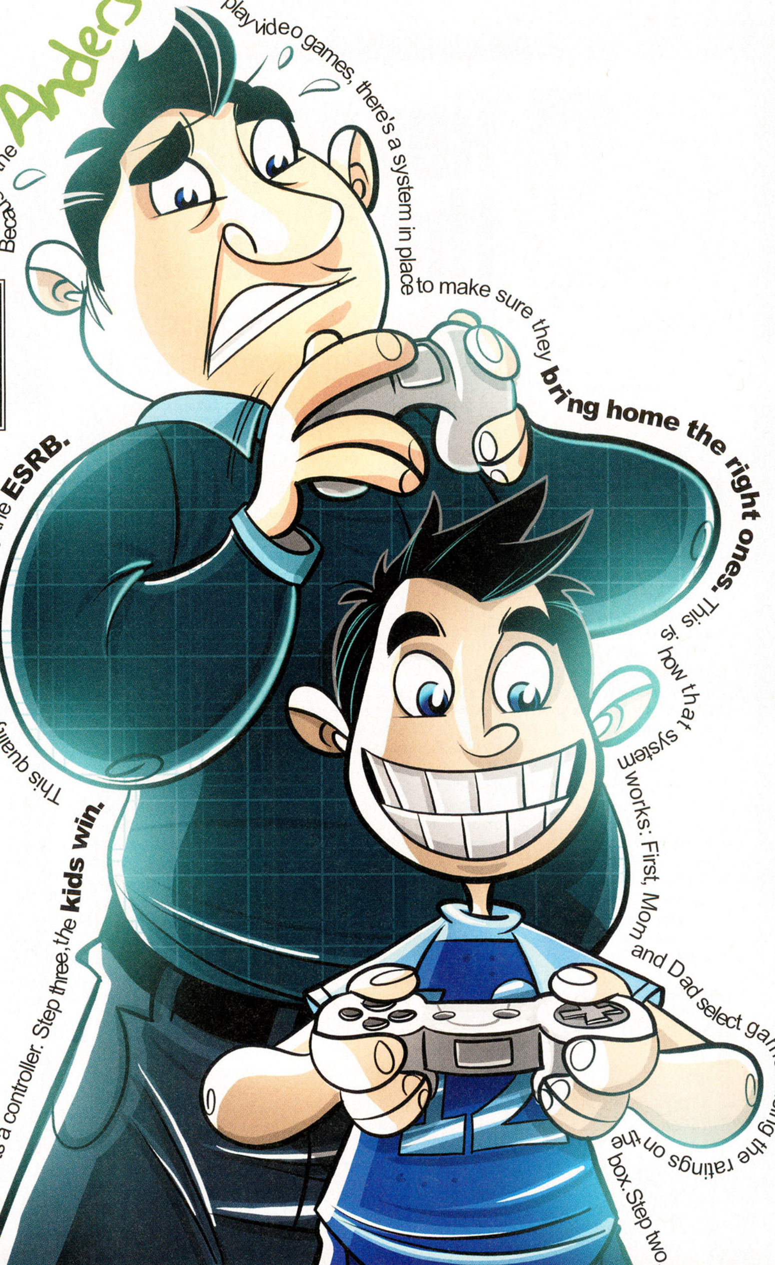
RESIDENT EVIL: DEADLY SILENCE
2006, NINTENDO DS
ILLUSTRATOR



TATSUNOKO VS. CAPCOM: ULTIMATE ALL-STARS
2010, Wii
ILLUSTRATOR



MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3: FATE OF TWO WORLDS
2011, PLAYSTATION 3
ILLUSTRATOR



Because the Andersons play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two, everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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Nobody tilts an alligator.

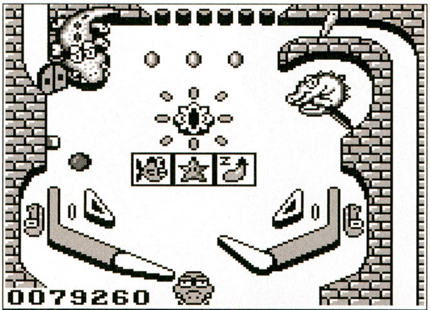
GAME BOY
Nintendo
Revenge of the 'Gator
HAL

Revenge of the 'Gator

Those who sport a mean mouthful of teeth always play a mean game of pinball.

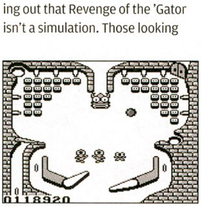
PLATFORM: **GAME BOY**
PUBLISHER: **HAL LABORATORY**
DEVELOPER: **HAL LABORATORY**
RELEASE DATE: **MARCH 1990**
COVERED IN ISSUE: **9**
NUMBER OF FISH NEEDED TO FATTEN UP A 'GATOR: **8**

Before HAL Laboratory became known as the studio behind Kirby and Super Smash Bros., the company developed several games that, although not as immediately recognizable as those two series, are all sorts of fun. One such example is the amusingly monikered Revenge of the 'Gator. Although it sounds like some sort of platformer—perhaps one where you control an angry, man-eating reptile—'Gator's box art betrays the title's true nature: it's actually a pinball game.



Don't worry; these gators won't attack unless you provoke them...or you score three eggplants on the slot machine.

It's a darn good pinball game, too. Between creating an interesting table and developing suitable ball physics, it's easy to mess up video game interpretations of pinball, but HAL did a fine job of crafting a board that proves enjoyable despite its somewhat simplistic nature. It's worth pointing out that Revenge of the 'Gator isn't a simulation. Those looking for a realistic re-creation of pinball will be severely disappointed. The ball doesn't feel like a standard metal pinball and it doesn't move as fast as you would see in real life. However, this slightly slower pace works perfectly with the Game Boy's small screen. There's also never any concern about the ball not going where you want it to go—the physics are spot-on (of course, that won't help you if your aim is terrible).

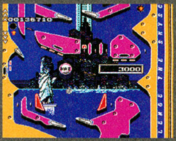


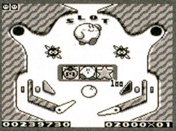
There's only one table in 'Gator, but with four screens and three bonus stages, there's more depth here than initially meets the eye. In addition to the standard pinball bumpers, spinners, and rollovers, the board is filled with gimmicks like a slot machine, an Arkanoid-style wall of breakable bricks, and an alligator that needs to be fed in order to earn an extra ball. The alligator theme, of course, permeates the game; the reptiles show up all over the place in a variety of shapes and sizes. A trio of dancing gators even performs to the catchy title-screen music. The Game Boy's original greenish-hued display served this title well.

Revenge of the 'Gator isn't one of the titles that sold players on the Game Boy, but those who were fortunate enough to try it out back in the day retain fond memories of it. —**PHIL T.**

PINBALL WIZARDS

Revenge of the 'Gator wasn't the only time that HAL played the silver ball. In 1990 the company also released Rollerball for the NES. This New York–themed pinball game features famous landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building, and the action is played a lot straighter than in 'Gator. There are no cute characters or silly bonus rounds here—just good ol' pinball. HAL veered back into the realm of whimsy in 1994 when it brought us Kirby's Pinball Land for Game Boy (guess who acts as the pinball). In this game, there are three tables from which to choose, each ruled over by one of Kirby's nemeses. The boards are populated with characters and items from Kirby's platforming adventures, and each table concludes with a boss fight. Like Revenge of the 'Gator, both of these titles hold up quite well.





HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. nintendopower@futureus.com

This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

HELLO
my name is
Chris

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COMIC HEROES

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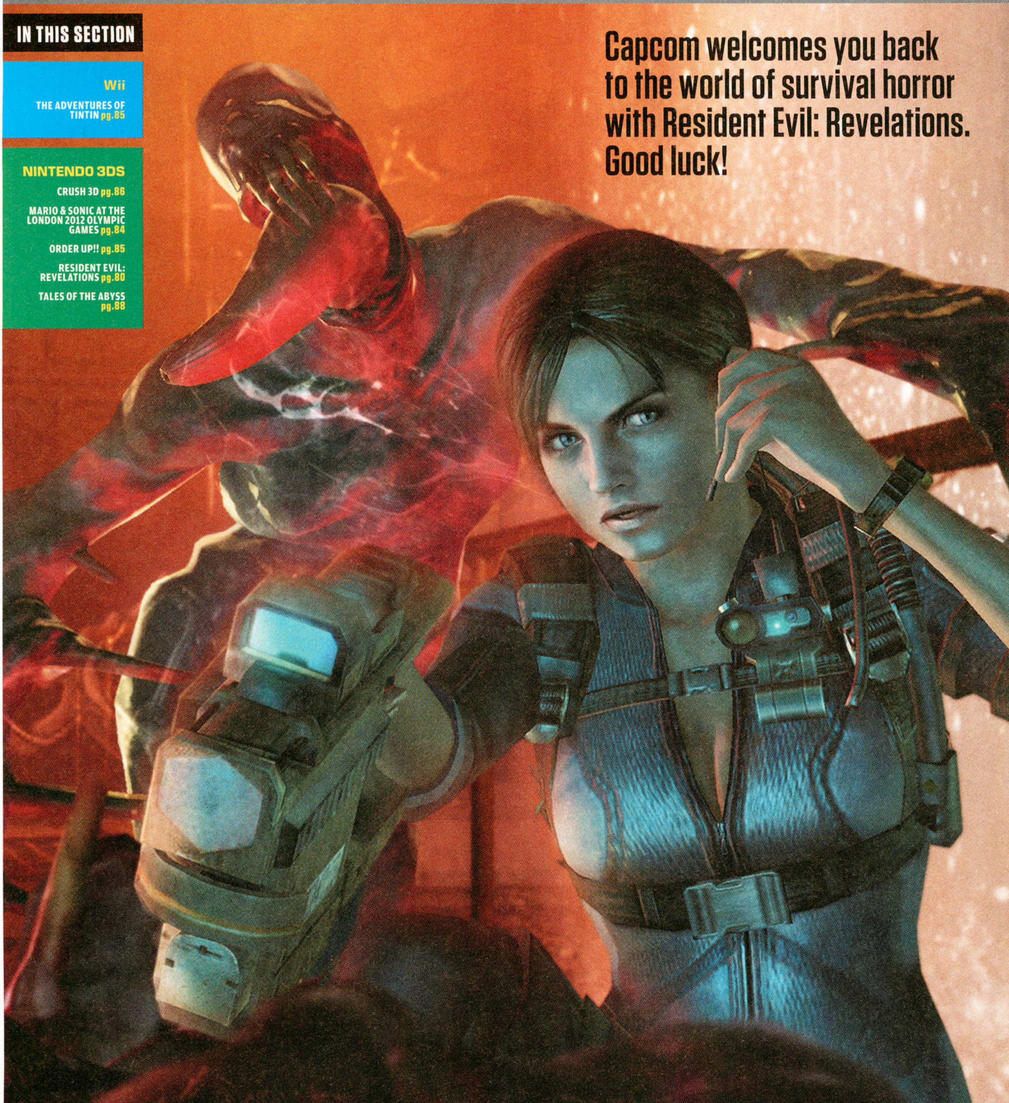
NINTENDO 3DS

CRUSH 3D pg.86
MARIO & SONIC AT THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES pg.84
ORDER UP!! pg.85
RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS pg.80
TALES OF THE ABYSS pg.88

Capcom welcomes you back to the world of survival horror with Resident Evil: Revelations. Good luck!



Necessary Evil

RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS

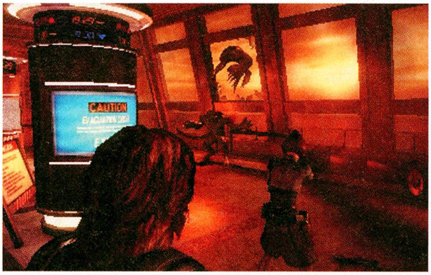
RATING: 9.0

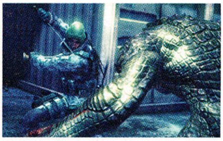
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
ESRB: **MATURE**

Less than a year into the handheld's life, this is the second Resident Evil title to hit the Nintendo 3DS. But if last June's The Mercenaries 3D seemed little more than an appetizer, Revelations is most certainly the main course. It's in the same league as the numbered entries in the series and ranks among the most ambitious offerings we've ever seen on a portable system.

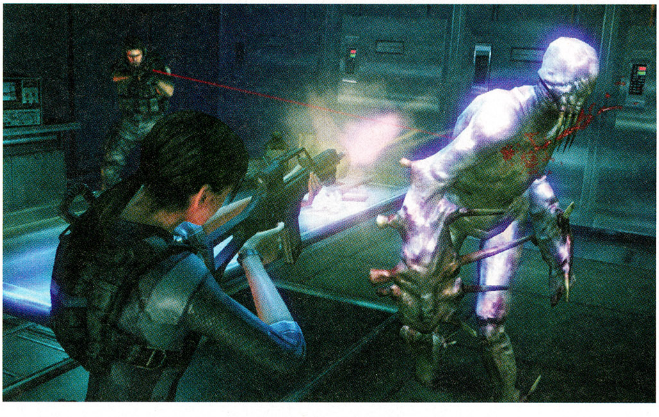
In promoting Revelations, Capcom has repeatedly heralded it as a return to the franchise's survival-horror roots. That largely holds true; this is the scariest Resident Evil in a long time. The majority of the game takes place aboard a (seemingly) deserted and rapidly deteriorating cruise ship adrift in the Mediterranean Sea. That setting proves to be the most discomforting since the original RE's Arklay mansion. There's a pervasive feeling of seclusion, and the way the boat rocks and creaks constantly keeps you on edge. It doesn't help that electricity throughout the vessel is sporadic at best, often leaving you with only a flashlight to illuminate your claustrophobic surroundings. Then there's the matter of bloodthirsty monsters that like to hide in vents, washing machines, bathroom stalls, and just about any place else they can squeeze into. The game made me jump with embarrassing regularity (at which point I would quickly look up to see if any off my coworkers were pointing and laughing), and that was while playing in a brightly lit office. My fellow wimps might want to keep an extra pair of trousers handy if they play somewhere dark and quiet.

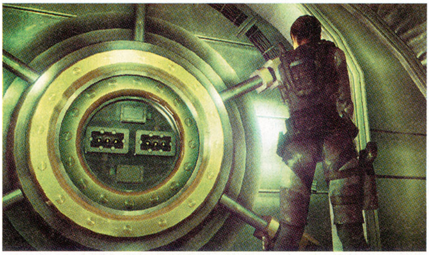
As for the survival part of the equation, the time you spend on the ship is very much reminiscent of the first few





[Below] Resident Evil's original heroes, together again.



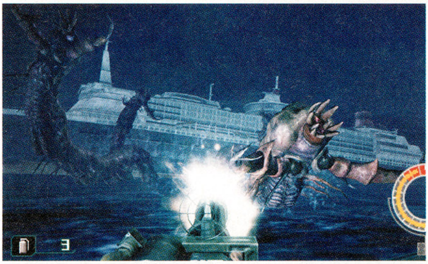


games in the series. There's a big focus on exploration and on scrounging for the items and ammunition necessary to keep yourself alive. The overall experience is fairly slow and methodical, but when the crap hits the fan, the stakes are high. It's a formula that works as well today as it did when it debuted in 1996.

Revelations doesn't completely abandon the action-heavy bent of its more-recent predecessors, however. The stuff on the luxury liner is the central vein that runs through the entire game, but frequent asides take you to different locales and points on the timeline while placing you in the shoes of alternate characters. (You always play as Jill Valentine on the boat.) You'll control newcomer Parker Luciani as he tries to escape the city of Terragrigia in the moments before its destruction, for instance, and you'll search a snow-capped mountain range for terrorist activity as Chris Redfield. These sections move at a much faster clip, with an emphasis on gun-play and generous supplies of bullets. Mixing those classic and contemporary play styles in a single game creates a varied pace that serves Revelations well. After having your nerves frayed by the unrelenting tension on the ship, spending a little time just mowing down enemies is a welcome catharsis.

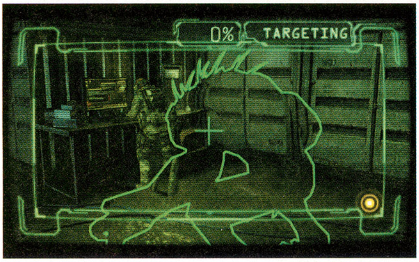
Jumping back and forth like that also provides an interesting framework for the game's narrative, allowing the developers to strategically reveal background information and interweave various arcs. Furthermore, the story is divided into episodes much like a television series; there's even a brief "Previously, on Resident Evil: Revelations..." recap at the beginning of each episode. Unfortunately, the tale itself isn't nearly as interesting as the way in which it's told. There are a couple of neat plot twists, but the big conspiracy at the center of the game's events is a convoluted mess that never quite managed to hook me. Adding to the disappointment is how little the story ties in to other installments of the series, despite taking place between Resident Evils 4 and 5. Don't expect any surprise appearances, either; Chris and Jill are the only returning characters. Granted, Resident Evil has never been considered a literary masterpiece, but fans have gotten invested in its comic-book-esque mythology over the years and Revelations strangely fails to capitalize on that. At least players new to the series won't feel like they're missing anything, I suppose.

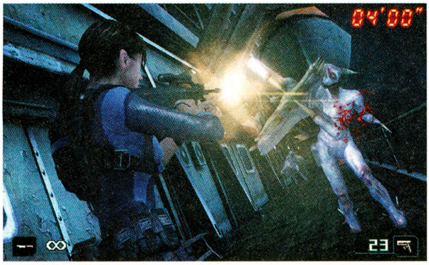
In any case, the less-than-stellar story isn't nearly enough to sink this otherwise-superb effort. The production values alone are likely to keep you glued to the screen. No other N3DS game looks this good. Every scene is rendered with incredible detail, the lighting



Genesis Does

Early in Revelations, you'll receive a special device called the Genesis Bio-Scanner that serves a number of functions—from scanning your surrounding for hidden items to revealing invisible foes. It's a nifty addition to the Resident Evil formula, and something we hope to see expanded upon in future installments.



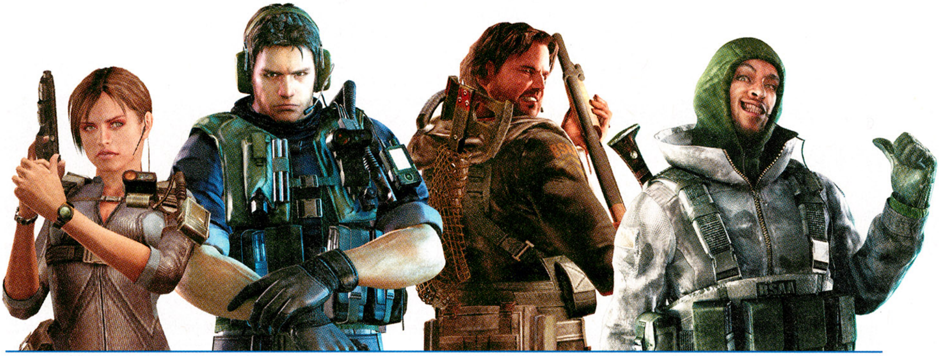


and texture work are phenomenal, and little touches like intricate reload animations make it clear the developers weren't about to cut corners just because Revelations is a handheld game. Likewise, there are some jaw-dropping CG cinematics sprinkled throughout, and a fully orchestrated soundtrack stands out as the best in franchise history. (One particularly haunting piece near the end even features a choir.) There's a ton of voice acting, as well, though it tends to drift back and forth between amusingly cheesy and downright bad. The sound effects suffer no such inconsistency, and deserve a significant share of the credit for the game's unsettling atmosphere. All in all, the presentation is just hugely impressive; I'd be hard-pressed to think of even a Wii game that seems to have as many resources poured into it.

This is a fairly meaty package, to boot. The main story mode takes about 10 hours to complete, and it does a nice job of keeping things fresh over that span. Not only do you travel to various locales as mentioned previously, but the cruise ship alone offers some pretty diverse settings—from dilapidated crew quarters to an opulent ballroom and a neon-lit casino. You'll also spend a bit of time underwater, which isn't nearly as frustrating as it is in most games. On the contrary, a few of Revelations's best moments take place beneath the surface, providing an experience that's completely new to the series. Some pretty cool set pieces pepper the journey, as well, though discussing those in any detail would risk spoiling the surprises. Let's just say that the T-Virus can evidently infect

Resident Heroes

You'll play as four different protagonists over the course of the story campaign. Here they are in order of our personal preference.

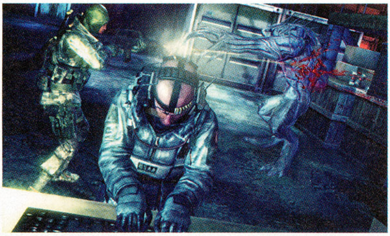


1. JILL VALENTINE
For all intents and purposes, Jill is the star of Revelations. She's the playable character during your time on the cruise ship (which makes up the bulk of the game) and quite frankly, she's the most likable person in the bunch. The view while you play her isn't bad either.

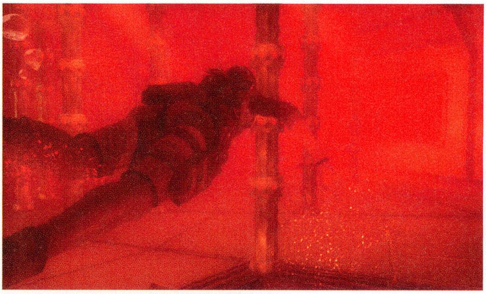
2. CHRIS REDFIELD
We're pleased to report that Chris isn't quite the jacked-up man-ape he is in Resident Evil 5. He's still pretty stodgy, but that makes for a humorous rapport with his flirty new partner, Jessica (who, it should be mentioned, wears the most ridiculous diving suit we've ever seen).

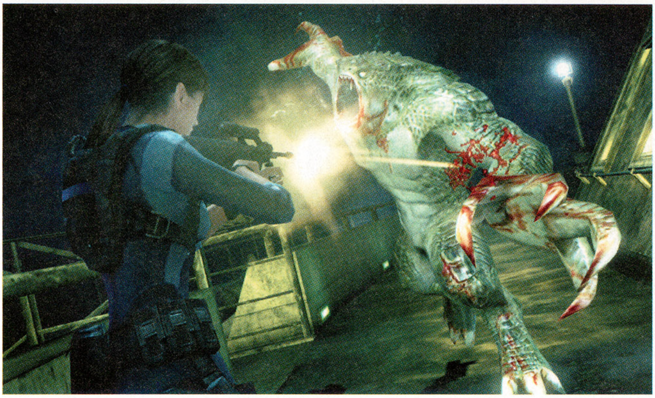
3. PARKER LUCIANI
Of all the new characters Revelations introduces (both playable and nonplayable), Parker is our favorite. His accent is a bit silly, but he's a heroic guy who saves the day on more than one occasion. Plus, while all the other characters carry wimpy knives as their melee weapons, Parker wields an axe.

4. KEITH LUMLEY
Keith and his partner Quint are easily the worst characters in the game. They're cartoonish stereotypes who feel completely out of place in this universe, and whose every conversation makes you want to turn off the volume. Fortunately, you don't have to spend a lot of time with them.



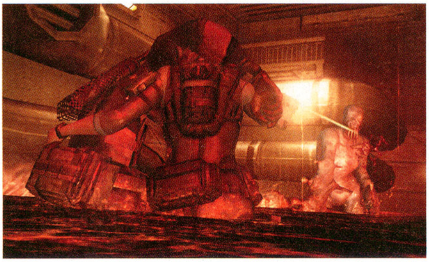
[Above] If Quint is such a brilliant computer hacker, why does he have to look at the keyboard while he types?





animals of *any* size.

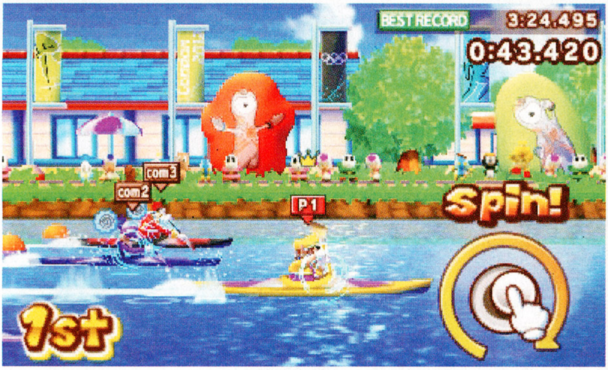
On top of the fantastic solo campaign, Revelations boasts a two-player Raid mode that, on its own, is deeper and more compelling than the multiplayer-focused Mercenaries 3D. As with that game, players choose a character, loadout, and destination, then go about exterminating every monster in their path on the way to the goal. The biggest difference is that Raid borrows the "loot" concept from RPGs like Diablo and Phantasy Star Online. Certain enemies drop random weapons and custom upgrades when they're defeated, and you'll earn a new firearm at the completion of each stage, with the gun's level and parameters determined in part by your performance. You'll also accumulate bonus points that can be used to purchase goods at the in-game store, and an achievement system allows you to unlock additional weapons, stages, and secret characters. Those elements don't make Raid mode as addictive as the aforementioned RPGs, but they do give it more staying power than The Mercenaries 3D. More importantly, it's a fun diversion intended as a *bonus* to the main single-player game rather than something meant to carry the entire package.

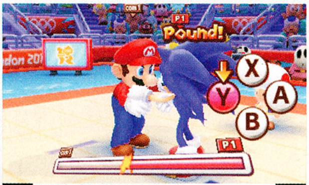


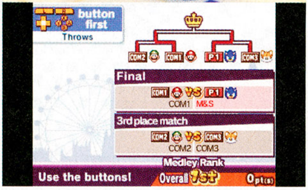
One thing Revelations does have in common with The Mercenaries 3D is its default control scheme. Capcom has done an admirable job working around the limitations of a single analog input, and if you've been playing Resident Evil games for a while, you probably won't have any major quibbles. The game does support the Circle Pad Pro, however, which adds a second analog input—thus allowing you to effortlessly move and shoot at the same time. This is unequivocally better. Whether it's worth the peripheral's $20 prie tag is a matter of personal opinion, but if the level of improvement here is indicative of what we can expect in future titles (such as Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D), it seems a sound investment. (Plus, for people with big hands like me, the Circle Pad Pro actually makes the system more comfortable to hold.)

Revelations makes stellar use of the default hardware, as well, though. The stereoscopic 3D is among the best on the system, and having a map and touch-accessible inventory on the bottom display is a major boon. Other uses of the touch screen—like pressing your thumb against it to open a fingerprint-enabled lock—add an occasional bit of novelty to the proceedings without getting in the way (which is exactly what we want in a game like this). If you have StreetPass enabled, you'll also receive special objectives that, if completed, reward you with all sorts of goodies in both the single-player campaign and Raid mode.

If Revelations isn't the best reason to own a Nintendo 3DS right now, it's pretty darn close. The game is an incredible showcase for what the handheld is capable of and a potent reminder of why Resident Evil remains one of the medium's most celebrated franchises. —**STEVE T.**







A Medal-Worthy Performance

MARIO & SONIC AT THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

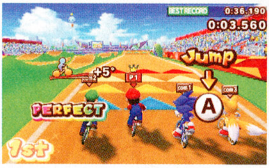
RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The two in red and blue take a break from their respective realms to team up once again, this time in celebration of the London 2012 Olympics. Given the title's recent release for Wii (and the genre of its two predecessors), it's no surprise that the franchise's debut on N3DS is also a minigame medley. But with a new summer-Olympics-themed slew of activities involving video gaming's biggest rivals, the formula remains fresh.

Included in the handheld version is a full-fledged story mode, which is the pinnacle of the game's single-player experience. Upset by having not been invited to the festivities, Bowser and Dr. Eggman join forces to stop the celebration with magical fog machines. Of course Mario, Sonic, and friends cooperate to halt their evil escapades, and attempt to solve the matter by beating baddies at Olympic events. The plot can be a little cheesy at times and is often predictable, but the personal interaction between Mario and Sonic characters is charming enough to outweigh any kind of simplicity. Each episode also contains a couple of vibrant cut-scenes to enjoy. Most importantly, this mode is a great way to familiarize yourself with the Olympic events on offer.

Thankfully, a decent chunk of those 57 events are entertaining enough to play more than a few times. Although the absence of the Dream Events available in the Wii version is slightly disappointing, the wide variation in the game's challenges should be enough compensation for most players. A few activities are a matter of who can mash the A Button fastest, but some involve unique combinations of the portable system's features. One interesting example is the gyroscopic-sensor-controlled Basketball activity; you move the handheld to aim at the hoop, and then shoot via a quick flick of the system. Other intriguing offerings include the Triathlon and Modern Pentathlon events, in which you rapidly engage in multiple activities within the same contest.



I also had a lot of fun with some of the less-complicated challenges. The rhythm games—Rhythmic Ribbon (slide and tap the stylus in proper time) and Dance Floor (tap the stylus to the beat)—are definitely worth revisiting. Other timing-based activities, such as Soccer (pull and release the Circle Pad to kick the moving ball) and Judo (press the onscreen button combination before your opponent does) are amusing, as well. The Judo event in particular is oddly satisfying (and comical), especially when a character like Tails vigorously slams Mario to the mat.

Unfortunately, not all of the events are winners. Many are just so-so, and a couple of them suffer from design flaws. In Taekwondo, for example, Dr. Eggman has a much longer reach than a character like Wario, which often means getting kicked in the face a few times before you can get close enough to pull off a move. It doesn't help that characters are event-specific, limiting your choice to one of four challengers per minigame. And while the games are supposedly designed for pick-up-and-play ease, many require multiple attempts before you really understand how to play. In some cases vague instructions are to blame, such as in Triple Jump (you aren't told when you're supposed to jump).

It can be fun to play certain minigames with other people, but the overall multiplayer experience is nothing special. Only a handful of events involve multiple players at the same time, so you're often forced to spectate until it's your turn. It's also a letdown that there's no Wi-Fi functionality besides online leaderboards, but fortunately up to four players can play via Download Play or Local Play.

Despite my gripes, Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games is still better than the typical minigame collection. While its memorability can be partially attributed to the awesomeness of the Mario and Sonic mashup, the game could stand on its own merits with its diverse array of events. Some activities aren't worthy of gold medals, but the addictive fun of the best ones proves that Mario and Sonic's latest competition is still a victory.

—CODY M.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT IS THE LAST (ALREADY-RELEASED) GAME YOU WANT TO PLAY BEFORE THE WORLD ENDS?

JUSTIN CHENG

Before the apocalypse happens, I'd like to play Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes one last time and find out if love really can bloom on the battlefield.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

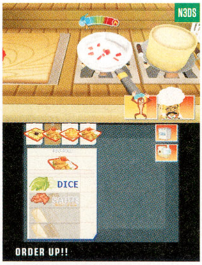
The World Ends With You for Nintendo DS. Not only because it would be thematically appropriate, but because it's a fine game in its own right.

PHIL THEOBALD

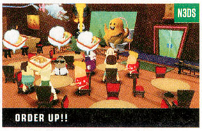
If 2012 marks the end of days, I want to be playing Mega Man 2 as the world burns. I've played through this NES classic countless times, but it always makes me smile when I do. The Dr. Wily Stage 1 theme will be the soundtrack to my demise.

STEVE THOMASON

My greatest shame as a gamer and as a Nintendo Power editor is that I've never played through The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past. I would remedy that.



ORDER UP!!



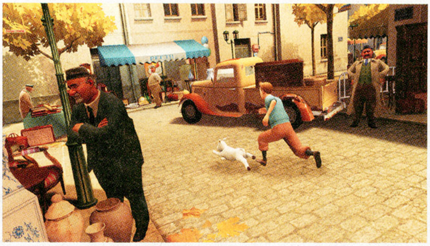
ORDER UP!!

ORDER UP!!

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **UTV IGNITION GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **SUPERVILLAIN STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

An enhanced version of the 2008 Wii console game of the same name (albeit with one fewer exclamation point), Order Up!! provides a fairly fun, fast-paced, and satisfying take on the cooking genre. As you'd expect, the title is packed with minigames in which you use the touch screen to chop, grate, stir, fold, fry, mash, boil, and dice ingredients as you whip up more than 100 dishes to please a seemingly endless stream of oddball customers. The minigames are less complex and varied than what you'll find in the Cooking Mama series, but this title offers a vastly better sense of progression, along with amusingly voiced characters and an entertaining story to tie everything together. Though an all-new Asian-themed restaurant (complete with new recipes) arguably makes this edition better than its Wii counterpart, Order Up!! isn't without flaws. Like its predecessor, the title can grow repetitive as you prepare the same dishes repeatedly, and the interface is somewhat clunky; message boxes sometimes interfere with the cooking. Furthermore, the game suffers from irritating load times before each stage, and there's inexplicable slowdown when a lot of customers are in the restaurant. **—CHRIS H.**



Ride the Unicorn

THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN: THE GAME

RATING: 5.5

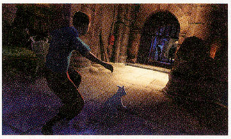
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTPELLIER**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

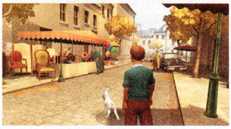
Fans of Ubisoft's other franchises will feel a sense of déjà vu while playing Tintin, as it is highly reminiscent of the old 2D Prince of Persia titles. This familiarity comes more from the side-scrolling viewpoint and the level design than the actual play mechanics; there is far less emphasis on precision jumping and more of a focus on fast-paced brawling than you would find in the PoP series.

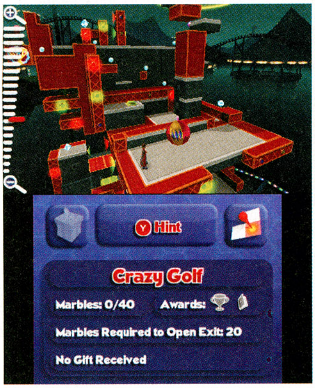
Combat generally comes down to little more than waving the Wii Remote, but Tintin's attacks deliver a satisfying thud and the cartoonish animation as the villains fall is always amusing. Other than the occasional shielded or armored foe, though, there is very little variation in the fighting system, so the action tends to wear thin after a while. If you have a friend available, you can avoid this repetition a bit with the multiplayer mode, which features new levels that place a greater emphasis on exploration.

A few flying stages, sword-fighting segments (which support the Wii MotionPlus accessory), and areas where you control Tintin's faithful dog, Snowy, are tossed in to mix up the gameplay. These bits aren't terribly complicated, but they do provide a nice break from the norm. Less successful are the occasional adventure levels that are filled with repetitive conversations and awkward camera angles. They tend to drag and break the game's pace.

Serving as a more constant irritation are the ugly, washed-out graphics. This simply isn't a nice-looking game. It gets even worse during the heavily dithered cinema sequences. If there had been a little more care put into the look and a little more variety added to the fighting, Tintin could have been fantastic. As is, however, it ends up being just slightly better than you would expect from a licensed kids' game. **—PHIL T.**





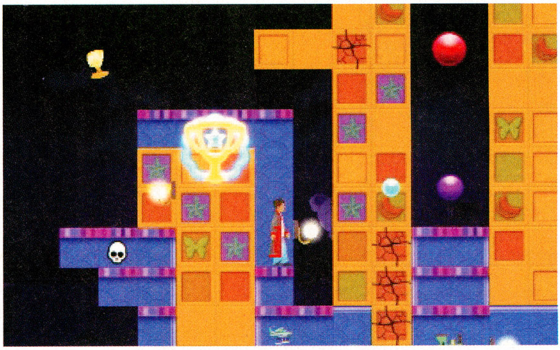


Crazy Golf

Marbles: 0/40 Awards:

Marbles Required to Open Exit: 20

No Gift Received



Congratulations, Danny. You've won the trophy for "best male protagonist wearing a bathrobe."

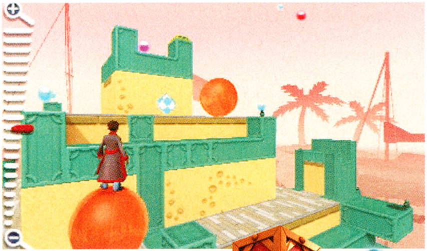
A Different Point of View

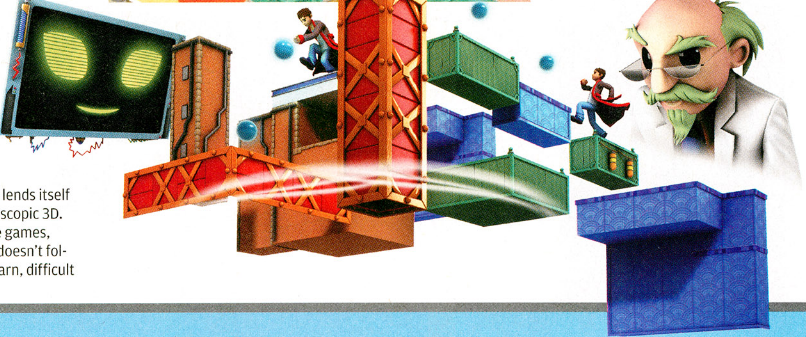
CRUSH 3D

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **ZOË MODE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Crush 3D gets its name from its primary play mechanic: at the press of a button, you're able to "crush" each game level from a 3D environment into a 2D plane (and back again). This creative concept lends itself to all kinds of crazy-cool level-design ideas, such as merging distant platforms into a single usable walkway, flattening an obstacle so you can walk past it, and squashing enemies against background elements. The result could be considered the world's most action-driven puzzle game or its most cerebral platformer; either way, it's an experience that's unique and challenging, and it lends itself perfectly to stereoscopic 3D. Unlike most puzzle games, however, this one doesn't follow the "easy to learn, difficult to master" mantra. Instead, Crush 3D is constantly throwing new twists into the gameplay—there are three block types to deal with initially, plus assorted enemies, different types of balls to push around, various switches, crumbling walkways, gears that activate machinery, paper-thin objects that are visible only from certain angles, portraits that come to life, icons that freeze time, symbols that prevent you from crushing, and more. On one hand, these concepts keep the game fresh, but on the other, focusing on just a few polished concepts might have resulted in a more satisfying game overall. Keeping track of all the rules, actions, and optional collectibles will make your brain feel like it's the thing being crushed. Luckily, there are hints on hand to prevent the difficulty from becoming overwhelming; I just wish there were an option to turn off the automatic camera changes. (That's kind of a big oversight in a game in which the viewing angle makes all the difference.) Minor issues aside, Crush 3D should provide plenty of fun to anyone who wants a mental workout. —**CHRIS H.**





"DO A BARREL ROLL!"
—PEPPY HARE, STAR FOX 64, 1997
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A Tale Worth (Re)Telling

TALES OF THE ABYSS

RATING: 7.0

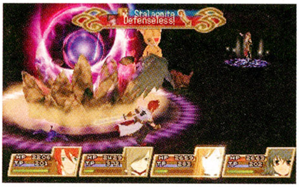
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Tales of the Abyss, the second full-fledged RPG for the Nintendo 3DS system (sorry, Find Mii doesn't count), is a welcome addition to the autostereoscopic handheld's ever-growing library. Yes, this is a port of a five-year-old PlayStation 2 game, but at least it's a port of a *good* five-year-old PlayStation 2 game. Not to mention it's a title that many—this reviewer included—have not experienced before. (This is in part due to the timing of the original game's release; it hit store shelves right before the launch of the next generation of hardware.)

Still, Tales of the Abyss should feel familiar to anyone who has played 2004's Tales of Symphonia on GameCube or that game's 2008 sequel on Wii. There's a motley cast of characters who have secrets that you will uncover throughout the quest, skits that help establish the personalities of and the relationships between said characters, and a real-time, fighting-game-esque battle system. This last one is a big draw for me because it helps keep the game's multitude of fights interesting. However, I miss the up-to-four-person cooperative multiplayer that's in Tales of Symphonia and the original version of Tales of the Abyss. But given the portable nature of this edition, the exclusion of the co-op is understandable.

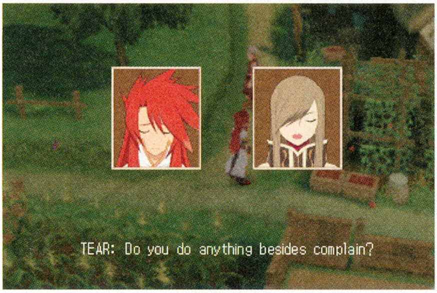
Despite having the signature Tales ingredients, Tales of the Abyss doesn't follow the formula exactly. Granted, the protagonist, Luke fon Fabre, is the clichéd amnesiac (he lost his childhood memories after he was kidnapped), but his attitude is different from that of most RPG heroes—mainly in that he's not very heroic. See, Luke's been locked up in his family's manor for seven years for his safety, and this sheltered existence has made him self-absorbed. When he's teleported away from his home in Kimlasca-Lanvaldear to enemy territory in Malkuth after coming into contact with a young woman named Tear, he has his first real exposure to the world at large, which can have humorous results. For instance, the spoiled Luke doesn't realize that you have to pay for fruit at a shop. You can sympathize to an extent, but the developers seem to have gone out of their way to make him a selfish, often-unlikeable brat. (Obviously, he matures significantly as the game progresses.)

Nonetheless, I found I could identify with some of Luke's frustrations when he interacts with the rest of his party. In addition to Tear, Luke is accompanied by his servant/bodyguard/best friend Guy, the sarcastic Jade, the money-focused Anise, and Luke's childhood sweetheart Natalia. Not only are these folks tight-



2Hits
572Damage
307
26865
388
HP 2281 TP 208
OVERLIMITS
HP 2429 TP 356
HP 2859 TP 266
HP 2690 TP 204

Luke
...Something about this thing is really annoying.


TEAR: Do you do anything besides complain?

—Mystic Arte—
HP 2510 TP 139
HP 1233 TP 118
HP 2363 TP 1
HP 2434 TP 194

Aerial Laser
4Hits
2713Damage

lipped when you first meet them—teasing that they have integral pieces of knowledge but refusing to elaborate until sometime down the line—but they also use unfamiliar terms such as "hyperresonance," "fonons," and "the Score." It can be flustering to have all these concepts thrown at you, forcing you to catch up either via context or having characters sit down and explain things (a good reason to have an amnesiac protagonist; you learn as he learns).

Once you get a grasp on everything, though, the predestination-versus-free-will story is interesting. What I found more compelling was not the story as whole, however, but rather the individual characters. Your allies are presented a certain way initially, but they hold secrets that, when revealed, can surprise you. I do wish the game went about developing these characters in a better way, though. Many of the interactions occur in the aforementioned skits, which amount to heads that speak via text. Unfortunately, these skits can become rather tedious, as you cannot speed up the text, nor is there any of the voice acting that's present in the bulk of the game.

Speaking of, the voice acting itself is decent overall—there are a few annoying ones, but the voices match the characters well enough. As for the visuals that accompany these voices...well, I wouldn't say Tales of the Abyss's graphics are *bad*; they're just outdated, especially compared to the jaw-dropping visuals of other N3DS games on the market. This title has 3D effects, of course, but they are less than great. The most noticeable thing that happens when you activate the 3D is that the speech bubbles pop off the screen.

Clearly, Tales of the Abyss has a number of faults—primarily due to its age and the seeming lack of effort on Namco Bandai's part in porting this game to the N3DS—but I still recommend that RPG fans give it a try. The combat is as enjoyable as it is in other recent Tales offerings, the characters are intriguing, and while the story can drag a bit, it's ultimately interesting enough to keep you playing until the end. **—JUSTIN C.**

146
FOF Effect
HP 2201 TP 127
HP 1109 TP 19
HP 2434 TP 247
HP 1373 TP 207

Crushing Spear
15Hits
8992Damage

SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T
Bit.Trip Complete	9.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.5	Sega	270	T
Cars 2: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	269	E10+
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion XL	6.0	Crave	274	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Conduit 2	7.5	Sega	266	T
Create	5.0	Electronic Arts	262	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Disney Universe	4.5	Disney	273	E10+
DJ Hero 2	9.0	Activision	262	T
Donkey Kong Country Returns	8.5	Nintendo	262	E
Driver San Francisco	4.5	Ubisoft	271	T
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 12	8.0	EA Sports	272	E
Fishing Resort	7.5	XSEED	273	E
Fortune Street	7.5	Nintendo	274	E
Go Vacation	7.0	Namco Bandai	273	E10+
GoldenEye 007	8.5	Activision	262	T
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	4.0	Electronic Arts	262	T
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Kung Fu Panda 2	2.5	THQ	268	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	9.5	Nintendo	274	E10+
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	268	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E10+
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 12	7.0	Electronic Arts	271	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	273	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
Michael Jackson: The Experience	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Mystery Case Files: The Malgrave Incident	6.0	Nintendo	269	E
Naruto Shippuden: Dragon Blade Chronicles	4.5	Tomy	262	E10+
NASCAR 2011: The Game	3.0	Activision	269	E
Pac-Man Party	4.5	Namco Bandai	262	E10+
Rango	5.0	Paramount	266	E10+
Raving Rabbids Travel In Time	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Rayman Origins	9.5	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rio	4.0	THQ	267	E
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	8.0	Natsume	272	E10+
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	7.0	Activision	273	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	7.0	Activision	273	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.0	THQ	266	E
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
Thor: God of Thunder	5.5	Sega	267	T
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters	8.5	Electronic Arts	266	E
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	6.0	Ubisoft	262	T
Top Spin 4	7.0	2K Sports	266	E
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Stealth Force Edition	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Virtua Tennis 4	8.0	Sega	267	E
Wii Play: Motion	7.5	Nintendo	268	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE '12	6.5	THQ	274	T
WWE All Stars	6.5	THQ	266	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011	7.5	THQ	262	T
X-Men Destiny	2.5	Activision	273	T

MORE ON:

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3

Despite being overshadowed by its Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 siblings, the Wii version of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 is still enjoyable. Sure, the graphics aren't amazing—especially compared to Activision's GoldenEye 007—but I had fun playing online against random opponents. (This holds true only at the time of this writing, of course; the game could be full of cheaters by the time you read this.)

—JUSTIN C.

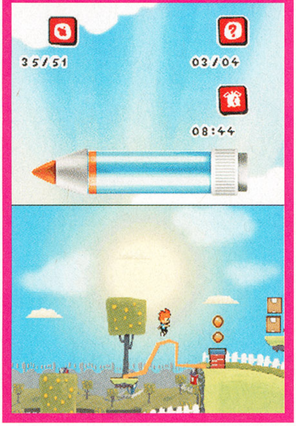
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Aliens: Infestation	8.0	Sega	272	T
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Bejeweled 3	8.5	PopCap	274	E
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	5.0	Majesco	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	3.5	Sega	270	E10+
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	7.5	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	8.0	Nintendo	273	E
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	8.0	Nintendo	262	E10+
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	3.5	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	8.0	Natsume	272	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kirby Mass Attack	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Kung Fu Panda 2	4.5	THQ	268	E10+
LEGO Battles: Ninjago	7.5	Warner Bros.	267	E
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!	7.5	Nintendo	262	E
Monster Tale	8.0	Majesco	265	E
Naruto Shippuden: Naruto vs. Sasuke	5.0	Tomy	262	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors	9.0	Aksys	262	M
Okamiden	8.0	Capcom	265	E10+
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Black and Pokémon White Versions	9.0	Nintendo	265	E
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Radiant Historia	8.5	Atlus	265	E10+
Rango	7.0	Paramount	266	E
Rio	5.5	THQ	267	E
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	8.5	Natsume	262	E
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	9.0	Xseed	271	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	5.0	Activision	273	E10+
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	267	E10+

MORE ON:

MAX & THE MAGIC MARKER

Max & the Magic Marker features a pretty neat concept—it's a platformer in which you draw your own, um, platforms to navigate levels and solve puzzles. Unfortunately, the execution falls short. The controls are clumsy, the action is sluggish, and the aesthetics are less than impressive. It's also rather inconvenient to constantly switch back and forth between traditional controls and the touch screen. The WiiWare version of the game is vastly superior. —CHRIS H.



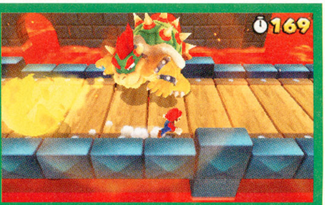
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Autobots/Decepticons	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
X-Men Destiny	2.0	Activision	273	E10+

Nintendo 3DS

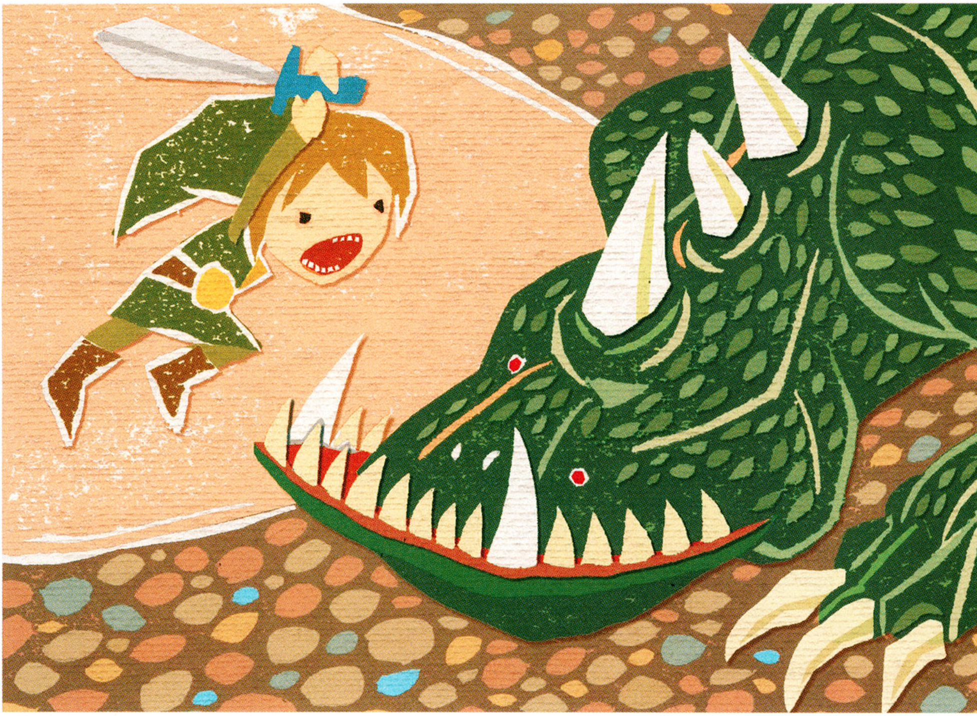
TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
Asphalt 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	266	E10+
Bit.Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II	8.5	Aksys	268	T
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	7.0	Crave	267	E10+
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Cubic Ninja	4.0	Ubisoft	268	E
Dead or Alive Dimensions	9.0	Tecmo Koei	267	T
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+
Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Dual Pen Sports	7.0	Namco Bandai	270	E10+
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	9.5	Nintendo	268	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.5	LucasArts	266	E10+
Madden NFL Football	6.0	Electronic Arts	266	E
Mario Kart 7	9.0	Nintendo	274	E
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
nintendogs + cats	7.5	Nintendo	266	E
Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions	7.0	Namco Bandai	269	E10+
Pac-Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pilotwings Resort	8.0	Nintendo	266	E
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection 3D	7.0	Crave	268	E10+
Pokémon Rumble Blast	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rabbids Travel in Time 3D	6.5	Ubisoft	267	E
Rayman 3D	8.0	Ubisoft	266	E
Reel Fishing Paradise 3D	6.0	Natsume	269	E
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D	7.5	Capcom	269	M
Ridge Racer 3D	8.0	Namco Bandai	266	E
Samurai Warriors: Chronicles	7.0	Tecmo Koei	266	T
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3	7.0	Electronic Arts	266	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Sonic Generations	8.0	Sega	274	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.5	THQ	267	E
Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Steel Diver	8.0	Nintendo	266	E10+
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Super Monkey Ball 3D	7.5	Sega	266	E
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition	9.0	Capcom	266	T
Tetris Axis	7.5	Nintendo	272	E
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars	8.0	Ubisoft	266	T
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D	5.5	Ubisoft	267	T
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Stealth Force Edition	4.0	Activision	270	E10+
WWE All Stars	7.5	THQ	274	T

MORE ON:

SUPER MARIO 3D LAND



I am having nothing but fun with Mario's first Nintendo 3DS outing. Not only is it an excellent update to the Super Mario Bros. 3 formula, but it also has the finest 3D effects that I've seen on the system. I won't rest until I've collected every Star Medal and grabbed the top of every flag pole. —PHIL T.



FANDOM

Linoleum Link

School project turned stunning tribute

BEFORE GRADUATING from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2009, Vikki Chu, who studied illustration and drawing, was tasked with one seriously intriguing assignment: to reinterpret events from a video game or comic book in any way she desired. Her response is seen here—a series of images depicting moments from The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, but modeled using a style reminiscent of more-recent series entries.

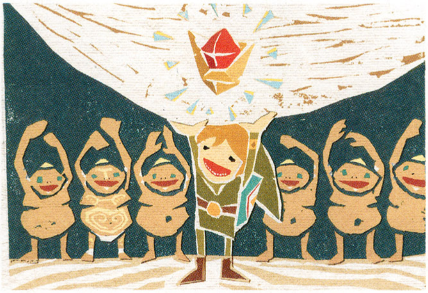
"Since Ocarina of Time is so visually different than the cel-shaded games, I thought it would be fun to try and give it that look," explains Chu. "I especially loved the woodcut intro to Wind Waker and the paper-cut-out art in Phantom Hourglass, so those scenes were huge inspirations."

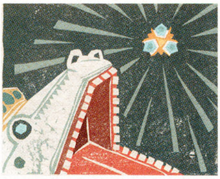
Though they may appear to be paintings or illustrations, the images were actually created using linoleum cuts—a process in which etchings are made into sheets of the material, then covered in ink and transferred onto paper. Chu later added digital color to the black-and-white images using Adobe Photoshop, and says each piece took about five hours from conception to color.

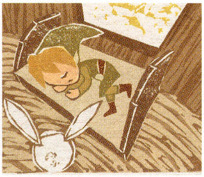
"Linoleum cuts seemed like the perfect medium for this because, like woodcuts, they are both graphic and tactile—which are qualities I thought would help me achieve the more stylized look I was going for,"

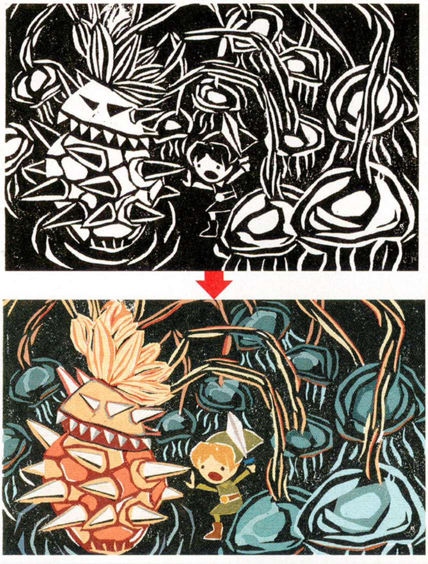
comments Chu. "Linoleum is also much easier to cut into than wood!"

Chu finished the assignment long ago and now illustrates for a living as a freelance artist, but when she carves out a little free time someday, she hopes to add a couple of images to the set. "The scene where Saria gives Link the Fairy Ocarina is pretty touching and important, so I'd love to revisit that," she asserts. "In fact, the entire Kokiri Forest would be really fun to do, as would scenes of Death Mountain and Zora's Domain." **—ANDREW H.**









The artwork starts out black and white. Color is added with Photoshop.

TAKE *your best* SHOT

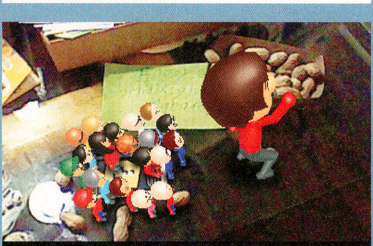
PHOTO CHALLENGE

SEND YOUR PICS TO photos@nintendopower.com.

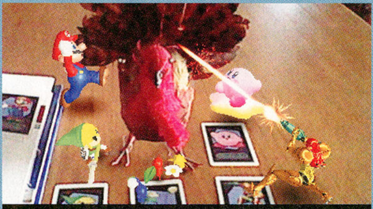
Use your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS system to snap a fun, gaming-related photo that matches this month's theme, then transfer the image to a computer using an SD card reader and e-mail it to the above address. We'll print the best ones.

THIS MONTH'S THEME: THE YEAR 2012

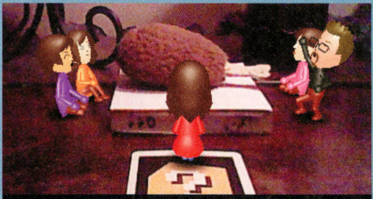
VOLUME 273'S THEME: THANKSGIVING



PHOTOGRAPH FROM ALLEN F.



PHOTOGRAPH FROM IAN W. H.



PHOTOGRAPH FROM KAYLA B.

READERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 MUST GET A PARENT'S PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A PHOTO.

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

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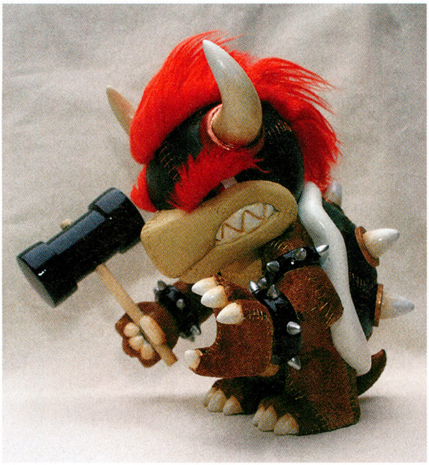
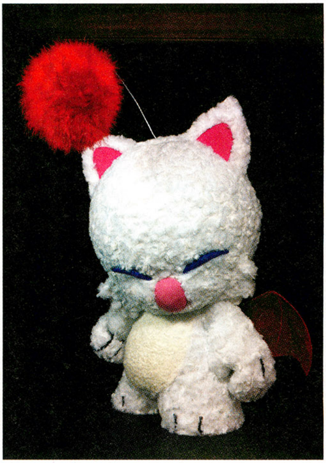


It's hard to believe these were vinyl toys.



FANDOM

Furry or Ferocious

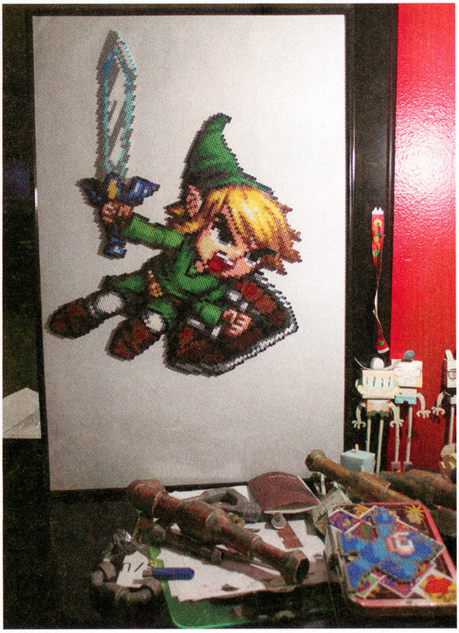
Intricate leatherwork and gobs of fuzz elevate these homemade figures.

WE'VE SPOTLIGHTED many amazing custom vinyl toys in this section in recent years, and while the average person might come across a blank figurine and simply find it curious, others—like Megan Smithyman, creator of these impressive pieces—see them as opportunities for artistic declarations. "Instead of a blank flat canvas, these were sculptures that just begged to be built on," she explains, noting her reaction upon first discovering the various lines of DIY vinyl toys years ago. "Blank-platform toys are a wonderful launching pad for creative expression."

Luckily for us, Smithyman harnessed that expression to create spectacularly detailed versions of classic video game characters—particularly the above re-creation of Mario's primary foe, Bowser, which sports stunning hand-stitched leather wrapped around one of Toy2r's blank Qee figures. She says the creation required hours upon hours of "cutting, gluing, sculpting, and sanding—lots of sanding" before the leather, paint, and other effects could even be applied.

Smithyman wanted to create a menacing physical version of Bowser. "He's a gigantic, tyrannical turtle! I just wanted to do the character justice by making a figure as badass as he is," she admits. Meanwhile, her takes on Final Fantasy's Moogles are as adorable as can be, with the largest one—based on a Kidrobot Mega Munny figurine—standing at a daunting 18 inches tall. "I liked the idea of a hard vinyl figure covered in soft fur. It allows for more shape and detail then most plush toys," she explains.

The 27-year-old artist—who formerly worked in animation production on *American Dad!* and *Futurama*—hopes to tackle another iconic Final Fantasy creature soon: the Tonberry. "I think my stitched-leather style would translate well to that particular character, and I love his design," she admits. And we love her custom toy designs, which you can follow by checking out mesmithy.com. **—ANDREW H.**



FANDOM

Beady Link

It's dangerous to go alone! Take 4,048 beads.

YOU MIGHT NOT THINK $15 goes very far, but Jesus Pacheco of Santa Ana, California, used that small sum to finance this meticulously crafted 4,048-bead Link mosaic. Though there's nothing special about the beads themselves—they're from a starter kit available in most arts-and-crafts stores—there clearly is something magical about this re-creation of Hyrule's favorite hero.

"I grew up on Nintendo games and absolutely love this particular series," says Pacheco. "I'd done some bead art in the past but nothing this big. I figured if I was going to make a Link sprite, it deserved to be big and epic."

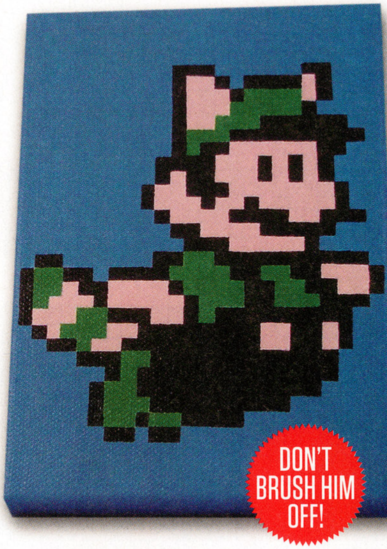
Pacheco tirelessly placed each bead on a grid, which is a bit like building a sprite pixel by pixel. The design comes from Spanish 16-bit artist AbyssWolf, and is clearly inspired by the SNES classic A Link to the Past.

After exporting AbyssWolf's image to Photoshop, Pacheco carefully fused a printout to parchment paper and used that as a guide for assembling this masterpiece. It took him 12 hours, and to pass the time he watched the entire *Super Mario Bros. Super Show!* TV series—a fitting distraction. The end result is hanging, framed, over Pacheco's bed. We think its brilliance would be far too distracting to sleep under, but maybe that's just us. —**DAVID W.**

FANDOM

Luigi Paint(ing)

Mario's bro gets his turn in the spotlight.

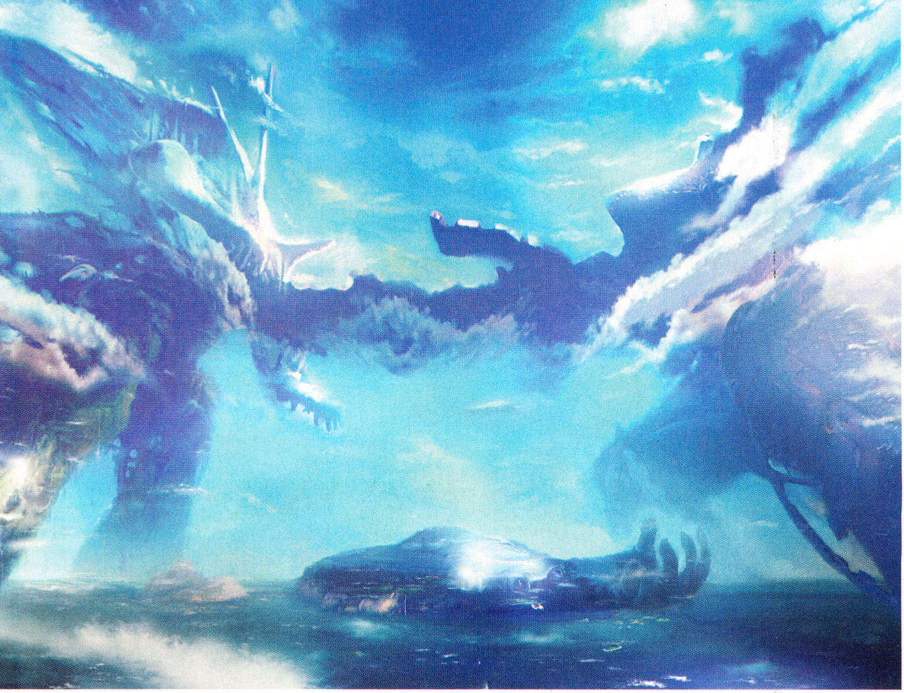


DON'T BRUSH HIM OFF!

Super Mario Bros. 3, 8-bit-style art, and Luigi are three of our favorite things. Did artist Nick Peters read our minds?

WE DON'T OFTEN SEE Luigi getting love, but Nick Peters of Breda, the Netherlands, made sure Mario's green-clad second banana got his due in this amazing Super Mario Bros. 3-era painting. To faithfully re-create the sprite of Luigi flying free with his raccoon power-up, Peters painstakingly drew a grid on the canvas and filled it in where the pixels would be. To maintain that sharp, 8-bit crispness, he then used a flat-edge brush to apply slightly water-diluted acrylics in many thin layers.

"There's no special reason why I like Luigi, but he reminds me of all my friends and family who I've played two-player sessions with over the years," Peters explains. Speaking up for 8-bit's unsung heroes seems to be Peter's passion. His next planned painting is of Excitebike's rider and his vehicle—heck, at least Luigi got a *name*. —**DAVID W.**



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NEXT MONTH

With Xenoblade Chronicles finally coming to North America, we'll take an in-depth look at Nintendo's hotly anticipated role-playing epic. We've also got a few surprises in store, including one that's the stuff dreams are made of.

NINTENDO POWER (ISSN 1041-9551) is published monthly except bi-monthly in January/February, by Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Phone: (650) 872-1642. Fax (650) 872-2207. Website: www.futureus.com. Periodicals postage paid in South San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution is handled by Time Warner Retail. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (12 issues): US: $19.95. Canada: US$27.95. Canadian orders must be prepaid. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST #R128220688). PMA #40612608. Subscriptions do not include newsstand specials.

POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to: Nintendo Power, PO Box 5770, Harlan, IA 51593-1270. Standard Mail Enclosure in the following editions: None. Ride-Along Enclosure in the following editions: None. Returns: Pitney Bowes, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2, Canada. Future US, Inc. also publishes @Gamer, Crochet Today!, Guitar Aficionado, Guitar World, Knitting Today!, Mac|Life, Maximum PC, The Official Xbox Magazine, PlayStation: The Official Magazine, PC Gamer, Revolver, Windows: The Official Magazine, and World of Warcraft Official Magazine.

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